FREEDOM AND TRUTH

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FREEDOM AND TRUTH

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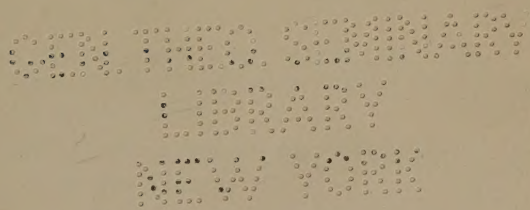
Modern Views of Unitarian Christianity

ESSAYS BY

SYDNEY H. MELLONE — HENRY GOW
GEORGE R. DODSON — WILLIAM W. FENN
R. TRAVERS HERFORD — WILLIAM GEORGE TARRANT
CLAYTON R. BOWEN — FRANCIS A. CHRISTIE
And the late JAMES MARTINEAU

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION
BY
JOSEPH ESTLIN CARPENTER



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I

INTRODUCTION

By Joseph Estlin Carpenter

THE Rev. J. Estlin Carpenter was born in 1844, being the second son of William B. Carpenter, M.B., F.R.S., C.B. He was educated at University College, London, and Manchester New College, London, graduating M.A. (*Lond.* 1866) and subsequently receiving the Degrees of D.D. (*Tufts* 1904), D.Litt. (*Oxon.* 1906), D.D. (*Glas.* 1908), D.Th. (*Jena* 1908 and *Geneva* 1909), D.D. (*Oxon.* 1923). He has held the following appointments: Unitarian Minister, Clifton, 1866–69, Leeds, Mill Hill, 1869–75; Lecturer in Manchester College, London and Oxford, 1875–1906; President, National Conference, 1900–3; President, International Congress of Religious Liberals, 1901–3; Principal, Manchester College, Oxford, 1906–15; Wilde Lecturer in the University of Oxford on Natural and Comparative Religion, 1914–17; President, British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 1916–18; Hibbert Lecturer, 1919; President, Manchester College, Oxford, since 1920. His publications include *Life and Work of Mary Carpenter; Life in Palestine; Studies in Theology* (with the Rev. Philip H. Wicksteed); *The First Three Gospels; The Bible in the Nineteenth Century; James Martineau, Theologian and Teacher; Phases of Early Christianity; Theism in Mediæval India*, and *Buddhism and Christianity;* article "Unitarianism" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics;* and many articles in Reviews.

INTRODUCTION

THE mode of Christian thought known as Unitarianism derives its name from its doctrine of the Single Personality of God as Father in contrast with the Trinitarian conception of his Threefold Being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But its significance is imperfectly indicated by its title. Its real importance lies in its associated teachings concerning man, the Scriptures, and the nature and work of Jesus Christ. Serious discussion of the constitution of the Godhead arose in England during the seventeenth century, and the controversy which marked its last decade was carried into the colonies across the Atlantic. In England during the next hundred years many of the congregations inheriting the traditions of English Presbyterianism gradually adopted a Unitarian interpretation of the Deity, which the eminence of Priestley provided with a philosophy of a quasi-scientific materialist type, a severe ethic of personal integrity, and the practice of earnest personal devotion. The movement in America, prompted largely by reaction from the uncompromising Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards and Hopkins, was no more organized than that in England, where Theophilus Lindsey left his vicarage at Catterick, and afterwards opened a chapel in Essex Street, London, for Unitarian worship in 1774. In 1785 the proprietors of King's Chapel, Boston, " the first Episcopal Church in New England," voted to strike out from the Prayer-book all phrases implying the doctrine

of the Trinity. On both sides of the Atlantic the movement gathered force. The British Parliament in 1813 removed the penalties imposed by statute on "persons who impugned the doctrine of the Holy Trinity." Channing had begun to preach in Boston, and when Dr. Lyman Beecher settled there in 1823 he found, as he said afterwards, that "all the literary men of Massachusetts were Unitarian; all the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarian; the judges on the bench were Unitarian, giving decisions by which the peculiar features of church organization so carefully ordered by the Pilgrim Fathers had been nullified, and all the power had passed into the hands of the congregation." [1] Two years later the British and Foreign Unitarian Association was founded in London on May 26, 1825, and by a curious but wholly undesigned coincidence the American Unitarian Association was established in Boston on the preceding day.

During the hundred years which have since passed the type of thought represented by a common name has passed through many phases. Unencumbered by the definitions of ecclesiastical authority it could absorb new knowledge and adapt itself to fresh modes of conceiving both the universe around and human nature within. It has seemed not unfitting, therefore, that two bodies thus allied in sentiment and purpose should offer some illustrations of the faith that is in them. The Essays in this volume reflect different aspects of Unitarian thought and life. Each writer, it is needless to say, speaks for himself, and is responsible only for his own contribution. No attempt is made to recount denominational activities.

[1] J. H. Allen, *Historical Sketch of the Unitarian Movement since the Reformation*, Boston, 1894.

The history of their organisations, the portrayal of the characters and labours of distinguished personalities, the record of their contributions to the literature of religion, philosophy, or devotion, to social improvement and politics, must be sought elsewhere.

That the theological conceptions broadly represented by these two Associations should move with a certain parallelism of change was, of course, natural. They sprang from common assumptions in the past; they were subject to the same influences of thought and feeling; they were in constant communication with each other. But the local conditions were different. New England possessed no parochial system controlled by Episcopacy under the State. Its Churches of the congregational type were often founded on covenants which were free from theological formulæ. The Professors in the Harvard Divinity School were bound by no creed. In such freedom the stimulus of contact with German learning and philosophy could operate more swiftly. Different minds seized hold of different portions of the great argument, and the main stress fell unequally on its successive phases. Here it is only possible to recall some of the landmarks of change.[1]

English Unitarianism, for example, was predominantly Scriptural. Thus the Rev. Charles Wellbeloved, Principal of Manchester College (then at York), could write in 1823, "I adopt the common language of Unitarians when I say, Convince us that any tenet is authorized from the Bible, from that moment we receive it."[2] At his ordination in Dublin James Martineau, fresh from his College course (1828), started from the same

[1] Cf. the Essay by Prof. Francis A. Christie, below, p. 331.
[2] *Three Letters* (to Archdeacon Wrangham), 1823, p. 51.

position: "When Jesus commands, I would listen as to a voice from heaven, . . . when he promises I would trust to his assurances as to our oracle of destiny." [1] But when Channing marshalled his arguments against the doctrine of the Trinity in his famous Baltimore discourse at the ordination of Jared Sparks in 1819, he went straight to great principles without making any attempt to discuss the Biblical evidence usually advanced in its favour. He appealed first to the impossibility of reconciling the current representations of three persons, loving each other and performing different parts in man's redemption, with the language and devotional practice of primitive Christianity; he repudiated the doctrine of the two natures in Christ as "an enormous tax on human credulity"; he held up to view the moral perfection of God in contrast to the scheme which represented him as creating mankind with a nature totally depraved, and then condemning the great majority to the pains of hell for sin which they could not possibly avoid; he denounced contemporary theories of the Atonement in which God in his Second Person took on himself a human nature that he might pay to the First the debt of punishment incurred by man, as though his own Being was divided against Itself; and finally laid it down that all virtue was rooted in man's moral nature, which, so far from being impotent, was endowed with the power of forming his life under the guidance of conscience, while God was himself "the life, the motive, and the support of righteousness within the soul."

New influences were already on the way. With the help of Kant, Coleridge was giving philosophical form to the conceptions which Words-

[1] *James Martineau*, by J. E. Carpenter (1905), p. 65.

worth had slowly gathered out of a profound moral experience, and in 1819 Thomas Carlyle began to learn German. It was not long before New England received its baptism into Transcendentalism. Hedge, born in the same year as Martineau, and afterwards the clear-eyed author of *Reason in Religion* (1865), had been five years at school in Germany, and came back familiar with Kant and Fichte. New writers began to speak in the language of Plato and Plotinus. The voices of Hindu and Persian mystics found sympathetic ears. In the old country progress was slower, and Keble and Newman had started new claims for the Church in *Tracts for the Times*. But in 1836 Martineau could calmly declare that "no seeming inspiration can establish anything contrary to reason; that the last appeal, in all researches into religious truth, must be to the judgments of the human mind; that against these judgments Scripture cannot have any authority, for upon its authority they themselves decide." Rationalism had come to stay. Without the process of laborious argument its results were displayed with glowing vision in the Address delivered by Emerson before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge, July 15, 1838, when he proclaimed that "Every man is an inlet into the deeps of Reason," and presented Jesus as belonging to the true race of prophets. "One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his world." Undermined by such principles the dogmatic fabric of ecclesiastical orthodoxy fell in ruins on the ground. With vivid intuition Emerson had grasped the great conception which Martineau afterwards recognized as the secret of his own

teachers, the perennial Indwelling of God in Man and in the Universe.[1] And to this Theodore Parker gave impassioned expression in the Sermon on *The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity* (1841), which deeply troubled the occupants of Boston pulpits, and the subsequent *Discourse on Matters Pertaining to Religion,* which had to wait many years before it was admitted into some Unitarian book-rooms. Such were the modest beginnings in England and America of what has been sometimes called "the New Reformation,"[2] a movement extending in many directions beyond organized Unitarianism.

Meanwhile, the writings in which Channing upheld the dignity of man and emphasized his moral freedom as the key to the interpretation of the relation between God and the soul had been slowly working upon English minds, and were vividly reflected in the lectures of the Liverpool controversy in 1839. Here Martineau renounced the necessarian pantheism which he had learned in his youth. Under Channing's influence he had realized that "moral perfection is the essence of God and the supreme end for man." The Evangelical doctrine of the corruption of human nature—securely lodged in the Anglican articles which declare that works done before the grace of Christ have the nature of sin—had become odious to the teacher who had learned of Plato to revere the "fair and good." But the distinction of persons in the Godhead seemed to have

[1] "Personal Influences on Present Theology, Newman, Coleridge, Carlyle," *Essays,* I. p. 280. The sequence of this view on the stages of Unitarian Theology marked by the names of Priestley and Channing is presented in the Sermon printed below, p. 23.

[2] Cf. the Essay of Dr. Mellone, below, p. 43.

no real significance save in connection with the doctrine of redemption, and this in its turn rested on a false view of man. Writing more than half a century later to the Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, of Chicago (February 1893), Martineau expressed this view with great decision.

"I confess that, Unitarian as I am, I have always sympathized with Channing's aloofness from any organization of Unitarianism as either Church or Philosophical School. Its doctrine of the Divine nature, as opposed to the Trinitarian, appears to me wrongly chosen for the centre of an articulated system of faith and thought; being compatible and having been historically combined with Materialism and Spiritualism, with Necessity and Free-will, with Pessimism and Optimism, with the finality of Death and with Immortality; all of them matters far more dear to the human heart and operative in human character and life than the theory of distinctions or no distinctions within the Divine nature. It is the *Anthropology* of the Orthodox, their doctrines of the *Fall*, and of the *nature of sin*, that demands their Trinitarian *theology* as a means of escape by redemption from the horrors they have presupposed. But a Trinitarian theology does not, in itself, imply or suggest, inversely, any such doctrine of Man and his Sin. Again and again it has been held—or at least its equivalent—by speculative Ontologists, Platonic and Christian, in conjunction with ethical and eschatological interpretations of human life altogether at variance with the Church notions. Nothing, in this respect, hinges on the difference between Unity pure and simple, and Unity with a plural interior, so that from this point no coherent system of thought can be derived in regard to the moral and spiritual life of individuals and societies, and no beginning be made of permanent communion." [1]

The argument overlooks the frequent plea that the Deity must include "Persons" capable of social affection towards each other, and even bound by mutual duty, as the ground of moral relations within humanity. But it testifies to the strong reaction of English Unitarianism

[1] *James Martineau*, J. E. Carpenter, p. 521.

against current presentations of "total depravity" with its associated exposition of vicarious atonement by a Being at once God and man. The same solvent had been at work in undoing the supremacy of New England Calvinism traced by Dr. W. W. Fenn in this volume,[1] and here also was the foundation of Unitarian philanthropy as illustrated below by the Rev. W. G. Tarrant.[2] To the establishment of the differences of worth among the springs of human action, and the recognition of a divine meaning in the authority of the higher over the lower, the later philosophical labours of the English leader, who still proclaimed his Unitarian conviction as he approached his ninetieth year, were to be largely devoted.

With advancing decades fresh influences were gathering increasing power. Geology was challenging the story in the first chapter of Genesis. Doctrines of "progressive development" were entering the fields of both animal and vegetable life. The Church might have come to terms with Galileo two centuries before, but as the "reign of law" was extended further and further, the chasm between ancient Hebrew imagination and modern knowledge grew wider and wider, and the evidence of miracles more uncertain. While Anglican liberals were preparing to face the problems thus suggested, Darwin flung a bomb into the central citadel of orthodoxy by the issue of *The Origin of Species* in 1859. The doctrine of Evolution there suggested fell in with the process of exposition by Herbert Spencer on lines which could be traced back to the Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte. It was applied by degrees to every department of investigation, whether

[1] Below, p. 251. [2] See p. 283.

in nature or in the history of man, and in many minds took the form of scientific materialism. Side by side with it the philosophy of Hegel established itself in some of the British Universities, and provided the conception of evolution with a metaphysical basis and a religious interpretation as the process of the Self-manifestation of the Absolute. Anglican theologians might make dexterous efforts to conciliate it with ecclesiastical dogma, but its consequences were far-reaching. When the brilliant young Welshman, Henry Jones, fresh from the lecture-room of Edward Caird in Glasgow, began to preach near Bangor (where he held a professor's chair), he soon earned the reputation of a heretic. "We are told," said a colleague, "that you deny the divinity of Christ." "I deny the divinity of Christ!" said Jones; "I do not deny the divinity of any man!"

To the denunciation of Darwin the Bishops soon added the condemnation of the Essayists and Reviewers, whose famous volume appeared in 1860. It is difficult now to understand the anger which it aroused. Three years later the highest legal authorities in the land decided that it was not penal for a clergyman of the Church of England to express a hope that by the mercy of God all men might ultimately be saved; nor was it necessary to believe that every part of every book of the Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The one thing that might not be impugned was its canonicity, the fact that it belonged to the sacred collections of the Old or New Testaments. The judgment was momentous. Only the year before Dr. Colenso had published the first part of his inquiry into the composition of the Pentateuch. English and American Unitarians had no reason to be alarmed.

They had long been familiar with the results of German study; had not Wellbeloved at York taught the existence of different documents in the Mosaic books, and Theodore Parker translated De Wette's *Introduction to the Old Testament*? [1] At the same time (1863) Renan's *Vie de Jésus* was running over Europe in tens of thousands, and the humanity of Jesus was exhibited in all the graces of French sentiment. In the following year Strauss issued his second Life of Jesus, and the career of the Prophet of Nazareth was sympathetically presented on the basis of Tübingen criticism. With the researches of Baur English Unitarians had been made acquainted by Martineau through a pioneer exposition in the *Westminster Review* (1853) under the title "The Creed and Heresies of Early Christianity," in which three distinctive types of doctrine in the New Testament had been clearly defined, that of primitive apostolic tradition, the exalted Christology of Paul, and its Hellenized presentation in the Fourth Gospel, assigned unhesitatingly to the second century. The older denominational formula, "Unitarianism the doctrine of the Gospel," lost its foundation. Those who had inherited the general conception of Locke, that Jesus was the Messiah and that his claims to that character were proved by prophecy and miracle, sustained a grievous shock. The argument from prophecy had long been abandoned, and the belief in miracle seriously challenged. But they were now told that this title denoted "no real object *in rerum natura*, but a wholly ideal personage, the arbitrary product of Jewish imagination." The modern study of eschatology was

[1] The general view of the Old Testament which has long been held by Unitarians is described by the Rev. R. Travers Herford, below, p. 131.

actually begun by Martineau in the same year (1863) by two important articles on the "Early History of Messianic Ideas." [1]

Biblical criticism was thus firmly planted on both sides of the Atlantic, though Anglican writers were not indeed yet ready to employ it. Taking the Gospels as they stood, and setting aside all inquiry into the stories of the Birth or the Ascension, or the nature and validity of the Johannine Christology, Seeley displayed Jesus in *Ecce Homo* as the preacher of the Enthusiasm of Humanity. He was thus treated as a historical phenomenon, without reference to ecclesiastical interpretations of his person, or the significance of his death. The denunciation of the book by Lord Shaftesbury only extended instead of hindering its influence. The older Evangelicalism was dying, and the transfer of the centre of Anglican theology from the Atonement to the Incarnation, with its extension in the Eucharist, shifted the stress of interest from the Epistles of Paul to the Gospels. In America under the surviving influence of Transcendentalism the Johannine teaching was expounded with profound spiritual sympathy by Furness and Sears, whose treatise on *The Fourth Gospel the Heart of Christ* (1873) did for his day what James Drummond did for English scholarship a generation later.[2] John James Tayler (then Principal of Manchester New College, London) opened the way for the view (now so widely recognized) of the post-apostolic origin

[1] Martineau's articles will be found in *Essays*, Vol. III.

[2] *An Inquiry into the Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel* (1903). Dr. Drummond, like Dr. Sears, some of whose hymns have gone all round the world, was a poet, though his *Johannine Thoughts* have not attained the same widespread acknowledgment.

of the Gospel in his *Attempt to ascertain the Character of the Fourth Gospel* (1867); and a little later Matthew Arnold brought his penetrating judgment and his pungent raillery to bear on the whole structure of orthodoxy in his famous parable of the Three Lord Shaftesburys in *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and his treatment of the Fourth Gospel in *God and the Bible* (1875). Soon after this criticism of the central article of Anglican Orthodoxy the Revisers of the New Testament (1880) by common consent on both sides of the Atlantic followed the example of numerous Unitarian predecessors in removing from the Greek text, and consequently from the English translation, the only passage containing a formal declaration of the Trinity (1 John v. 7).

Meantime every adjunct of historical study was provided. Palestine was mapped, and sites were determined. An immense mass of illustrative material was gathered from Jewish sources, and the central Person of the Gospels was studied on the same basis as the missionary activity of the Apostle Paul, whose picture of the world and of Christ's place in it received new and significant illustrations. The humanity of Jesus could thus no longer be kept in the background. "Up to the time of his death," said Dr. Gore,[1] "he lived and taught, he thought and was inspired and tempted, as true and proper man, under the limitations of human consciousness which alone make possible a real human experience. Of this part of our heritage we must not allow ourselves selves to be robbed by being 'wise above that which is written.'" To conciliate this recognition of historical fact with ecclesiastical dogma a process

[1] *Dissertations on Subjects connected with the Incarnation* (1895), p. 87.

of *Kenosis* is invoked by which the Eternal Word is supposed to have "emptied himself" of his omniscience and self-knowledge, as well as of his omnipotence. With the metaphysical difficulties involved in this conception we are not here concerned. What a Unitarian understands by describing Jesus as "true and proper man," and what value such a figure possesses for him, the reader may gather from the Essay of Dr. Gow.[1]

The line of thought suggested by these studies was further reinforced by the growing perception that Christianity was not the only religion in the world derived from a personal founder or the sole possessor of sacred books containing many important truths. Early translations of Sanskrit hymns from Indian plains, prophecies of resurrection and judgment uttered by Zarathustra on Persian highlands, songs of praise from the temples or visions of the soul's journey out of the tombs beside the Nile, penitential confessions from Babylonia, or lessons in Ethics from China to Greece and Rome, began to arouse fresh interest. It became clear that religious truths were not the exclusive possession of any single race. The Oxford scholar of an elder day might talk of the "three great false religions, Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Islam," but the student recognized that when the "historical method" (as Priestley first called it) was applied to Christianity, this classification was no longer valid. Readers of the "Lord's Song," celebrating the incarnation of Vishnu as Krishna, could not deny the similarity of Indian experience to the Johannine when they found a promise of communion with the Deity based on the disciple's love: "By love he knows

[1] Below, p. 219.

me in reality, what and who I am; thereby, knowing me in reality, straightway he enters into me; they that worship me in love dwell in me, and I in them." As early as 1860 William Rounseville Alger began his long labours on the *History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*[1] which brought so many of the ethnic religions to stand side by side with the teachings of the Bible. With clear-eyed perception did one of the best beloved of Boston pastors grasp the significance of the new knowledge. In his little volume on *Orthodoxy, its Truths and Errors* (1866), James Freeman Clarke (1810–1888) gave proof at once of his insight and his faculty of reconciliation. These qualities were displayed with notable breadth in his survey of *Ten Great Religions* (1871),[2] which brought the wide range of Comparative Religion within the reach of ordinary readers. The Free Religious Association, formed on the broadest lines of the new study, gained eminent support from Unitarians, especially in the West, until the National Conference at Saratoga in 1894 brought the right and left wings of its activities into fraternal harmony. The literature of modern orthodoxy in England has adapted itself without reserve to a generous application of the principle that "in all ages Wisdom, entering into holy souls, maketh them friends of God and prophets," and the doctrine of total depravity troubles it no more. It is only by way of theological survival that the infant at the parish font is still said by the priest to be "delivered from God's wrath."

The recognition of the place of religion in human

[1] Fourteenth edition, 1889.

[2] A sequel followed in 1883; fifty-three editions have been published of Part I., and thirty-four of Part II., the last of each in 1924.

development was further strengthened by the new science of anthropology, introduced by Tylor's great work on *Primitive Culture* (1871), which gave it a secure place in the general scope of evolution. By various philosophic modes was the world-process linked with the fundamental beliefs of Theism, whether through the converging lines of the causal order of the universe and the moral order of the human conscience adopted by Martineau, or the spiritual idealism of Edward Caird. But metaphysical speculation could no more stand still than historical inquiry. New aspects of fact presented themselves to new thinkers, and Bergson brought a fresh and subtle mind to the perpetual problem of the relation of the three great objects of contemplation, Man, the World, and God. What place there is for the Unitarian conception of the Deity in the present stage of scientific knowledge and philosophical interpretation may be read in the Essay by Dr. Dodson on *The Evolution of the Idea of God in the last Hundred Years*.[1]

But the final word on Christianity was not uttered when Jesus was recognized as "true and proper man." What was the meaning of the title Christ attached in Greek to his ancient Hebrew name? It signified, of course, an "Anointed." Sixty years ago Martineau had called attention to the remarkable literature which was produced in Palestine between the Book of Daniel and the age in which the Gospels were written, and Drummond had followed him with the first English treatise on *The Jewish Messiah* (1877). The devoted labours of Canon Charles have made a whole series of these apocalyptic books accessible to English readers. They are

[1] See p. 87.

concerned with new views of the universe and its inhabitants, with the approaching end of "the age that now is," the resurrection, the judgment by God or by the Son of Man, the torments of hell, the happiness of the saints, the new heaven and the new earth. In various forms these ideas are reflected in the Gospel language and the speeches and letters of the Apostles. What is their value, how far were they really shared by Jesus, what meaning did he attach to them, in what sense or to what extent did he claim for himself a central part in the great events which they predicted? The inquiry is difficult, and its issues are far-reaching, for it is clear that the ministry of Jesus and the authors of the New Testament were all involved in a great illusion. For more than a generation these questions have pressed gravely on all serious students. The different answers that may be given on the lines of Unitarian thought are discussed by Professor Clayton Bowen.[1]

Historical criticism may prove unable to pronounce a definite judgment to which general assent may be legitimately invited. Some questions must always be left open, and this, it may reasonably be held, is one of them. But the essence of Christianity is in no way involved in this uncertainty. Behind the scenic majesty with which the advent of the Son of Man is invested in the symbolic language of Daniel lies the heart of the Gospel, the conception of the Divine Fatherhood. "The rays of this revelation," says Sir Henry Jones, "extend over the whole region of man's experience. The idea of God as Father illumines with a new splendour not only the nature of man, but the whole universe in which a God, who is infinite Love, manifests his power and his

[1] See p. 173.

goodness. It implies a re-interpretation not only of man's nature, but of the conditions under which his nature can be realized, and of the obstacles by victory over which alone the realization of that which is spiritual can take place. It implies a re-interpretation of the world, and of all that man meets in the world; of sin and temptation, of sorrow and suffering and death. Duty acquires a new grandeur, in becoming the service of a loving Father, who is God, it becomes at once more obligatory and more free. Sin acquires a deeper taint, because a more tragic wrong is done to a greater love; and the forgiveness of sin acquires a new tenderness and fullness. The relations of man to man are suffused with a new glory." True that the proclamation of the Kingdom or Rule of God by Jesus contained no constitution for its members, no hierarchy for its ranks, no systematic legislation covering every detail of personal or social conduct. "The great principles of moral and religious life cannot be revealed to man in the fullness of their implications. The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed . . . which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." To know spiritual principles man must live the spiritual life. It is only the history of the world that can evolve the contents of the principle by which the world subsists.[1] It was with a just prophetic confidence that the most scholarly and devout of modern English Unitarians, James Drummond, declared "Christianity has still its grandest victories to win." [2]

[1] *The Hibbert Journal Supplement*, "Jesus or Christ" (1909), p. 96 f. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

II

THREE STAGES OF UNITARIAN THEOLOGY

By James Martineau

JAMES MARTINEAU was born April 21st, 1805, and died January 11th, 1900. He stands among the greatest religious thinkers of the century. By his ministry in Liverpool and in London, and by his work as Professor, and afterwards Principal of Manchester New College, London, he profoundly influenced the Unitarian movement in which he had been educated. His lofty character and unique intellectual gifts won world-wide recognition, and the Universities of Harvard, Leiden, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Oxford conferred their highest distinctions upon him. His Essays, Reviews, and Addresses, collected and reprinted in the four volumes published under that title in 1890, show the power of the work done by him through forty years, in the exposition and defence of rational religious faith, and indicate the stages by which he arrived at the position set forth in the great works on *Types of Ethical Theory* (1885); *A Study of Religion* (1888); and *The Seat of Authority in Religion* (1890). The moral and religious experience founded on the metaphysical interpretation of God, the world, and man, set forth in these volumes, is portrayed in the searching sermons entitled *Endeavours after the Christian Life* and *Hours of Thought*, which have nourished the faith of numbers of readers in a wide range of Churches, and belong to the permanent Library of English Devotion.

The following sermon (preached before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1869) deals with the main conception of Unitarian theology, tracing the doctrine of God through successive phases in connection with the idea of Personality, and finds the strength of the Unitarian faith in the centre of all true religious and moral theory—the conviction that for all spiritual natures, unity and personality are one.

THREE STAGES OF UNITARIAN THEOLOGY

"For thou art our Father,
Though Abraham knoweth us not,
And Israel doth not acknowledge us;
Thou, O Lord, art our Father,
Our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name."

THE true prophetic heart, may we not say, breathes through these words, and gives them a music that can never die away. They are the tones of a spirit tender, yet clear and strong; reverent in memory, open to love, warm with the humanities, yet driven from the sunny front of life, and in its retreat falling back on the sheltering loneliness of God. And do they speak for the Hebrew poet alone? Rather do they pitch the note of a perpetual hymn, caught up and delivered on, age after age, by the noblest voices of history. In the education of our race it is inevitable that the children should outgrow the father's house, and emigrate to new lands of thought; and could the men of old come back among us, and look at us with their patriarchal eyes, who knows but that we might ask their blessing in vain, and Abraham perchance would be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not? To hard and driving natures, content to start the world afresh with each generation, this may seem a mere sentimental grief. But the really progressive minds, that appear to run furthest from the past are most conscious of their debt to it, most tinctured by its inner life, and most love its venerable names; and for them

to be treated as outcasts from the family of the faithful, and find themselves exiles from the communion to which they cling, is a lot more pathetic than stripes and bonds. A divine necessity, however, is laid on them to bear it. They cannot linger in semblances; they cannot tamper with words; they cannot look away from the light, and play it off in tricks of artificial refraction; they cannot breathe the air of half-truth and half-pretence which maintains the sluggish pulses of the world, but must pant aloft into the untainted elements of life: and as this thirst for the pure reality, this sensitiveness to the poison of falsehood, this inability to worship except in absolute simplicity of spirit, must needs take them apart from the level of human sympathy, and often leave the tenderest affections the most alone, what remains but that they fling themselves from the last brink of earthly reliance, and in a passion of infinite trust cast themselves upon the only True, and cry, "Thou, Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is everlasting"?

No Reformers have been more unconditionally thrown upon this sublime trust than those whose works we celebrate and prolong this day. As if to justify their own protest against the Trinitarian theology, and prove for them how it darkened human affections, they have been treated as aliens from the sacred commonwealth; and because they would not, at Athanasius's bidding, worship they knew not what, but, abiding by the religion of Christ, would pray only as he prayed, and own no more than his two great commandments, and know no blessing but his beatitudes, they have been thrust outside the walls of the "City of God," and told that the Fathers of the faithful are ignorant of them, and the Christian Israel acknow-

ledges them not. Be it so: these chartered believers may shut up themselves, but cannot enclose our God: without, as well as within, he lives; and, as the gates close behind us, and we go into the open and solitary place, where the cathedral bells are lost and the litanies are heard no more, newer voices of his Spirit may perhaps float to us on the silence, and we may grow into larger apprehension by simply being alone with him. That there really has been a natural expansion and enrichment of Unitarian theology, favoured by the very banishment into which it has been driven, will appear from a mere glance at the successive stages of its modern history.

Religion, even in its most intellectual forms, can never entirely lose its symbolical character; and the real interest of its doctrines will usually be found far behind the apparent. Had the question respecting the person of Christ concerned merely the composition of an historical individual, human or superhuman, it could never have stirred so intense a passion, and tracked its way through Christendom with such a line of storm. The secret of the strife lies deeper. He stands in it not for himself, but for mankind; and the doubt, whether within that meek and suffering form the Divine essence is hid, truly means, to those who shrink from it, whether, for us too, any divine life is possible, and the Father of spirits will take up his abode with us. It is not the Jesus of the biographers, but the ideal of our spiritual humanity, the type and head of our race in its heavenly relations, whose seamless robe has been torn by the rude hands of controversy; and were it not that his problem and ours were bound up together, that his divineness was the assumed measure of our communion with God, and that what was

asked about him was answered about us, the inquiry must have tired itself out in traversing the ages. But the mind returns with unexhausted wonder to the questions, "What are we?" "Where do we stand in the hierarchy of being?" "Do we belong only to Nature beneath us, or can we live in love with God above us?" and, under the disguise of a *Christology*, these *human* issues have ever been upon their trial, and, to those whose ears are open, have mingled with the voices of angry disputants an undertone, not of softening piety alone, but of unsuspected sympathy.

The doctrine of the Trinity is an economy for linking together the Human nature and the Divine; for snatching man, as an exception, from the general physiology of the world, where he would only, like the cattle, be a creature of the universal Maker; for recognizing his Sonship and Divine similitude, as an eternal reality, whether known to himself or unknown, whether reserved in heaven or become historical on earth; and for bringing out his implicit consciousness of this, in the whispered pleadings of a Spirit supreme above his own. God in the Universe, God in History, God in the personal Soul—these three are separately recognized, yet blended into one, in the formula against which we protest; and in dissolving that formula we may be thought to hazard the balance of these relations and to insulate ourselves on some hard and narrow unity. Our simpler conception, it is affirmed, is visibly inadequate both to the fullness of the Divine perfection and the depth of human experience, and repels the richer and riper souls of Christendom by the Mohammedan baldness of its piety, and the Stoical evenness of its human ideal. Above all, we are assured, do we fail to provide the needful mediation

between heaven and earth. The Christ of the creeds, being *both* God and man, can bring the two natures into harmony. The Christ of the Arians, being *neither* God nor man, is cut off from both, and cannot blend them in accord. The Christ of the Unitarians, being *wholly* man, carries in himself the alienated nature, and lies under the disqualification he is needed to remove. He may be an *example* upon the human level, but cannot, it is said, lift us to the Divine. Without denying either all that is claimed for the Trinitarian scheme or all that is charged on our own, we shall find something to countervail the merits of the former, and to repair the defects of the latter, in the growth of our theology during the eighteenth century.

The strength of the Unitarian faith lies in the very first position which it seized, and which I hold to be the impregnable centre of all true religious and moral theory—that, for all spiritual natures, *Unity* and *Personality* are One. That which distinguishes you from another, and holds you to your identity from day to day, is the permanent Self-consciousness which the stream of varying thoughts touches as it flows, and the continuous Will which issues or permits the most opposite activities. These are the highest and characteristic attributes of our being; and by its highest attributes must every nature be measured, and in them must its essence be found. Suppose them to change: let a fever obliterate your memory of the past, or establish within you a double and alternate consciousness, unrelated as your dreaming to your day; and we could no more call to account this fluctuating Self than we could punish John for Peter's lie. The moral identity once broken, all other continuity goes for nothing, all other sameness is illusory. What boots it that you are still

as tall, as strong, as swift as you were before; that your friends recognize your photograph and your voice; that your pulse has not altered its speed, nor your brain its size? your being has fallen into fragments which these threads are ineffectual to blend. This rule of thought is our only guide when we pass to things Divine; and it compels us to say that, if God be not One *Person*, he is not One at all: whatever else remains, when you have multiplied the *Personal* centres of thought and will, is lower than these, and any Unity it may have is of no interest to us; for whom *nothing Impersonal can ever be Divine*. The Godhead, if by that you mean the Supreme Object of our worship and our trust, subsists not in any spiritual substance within whose compass separate Personalities may have their presence and unfold their celestial drama; but in the living seats of Infinite Mind and perfect holiness: a plurality of these is a plurality of Gods; and if you try to integrate them again by a common relation to some impersonal essence, you do but deify the lower after taking away the Unity from the higher.

I know it will be said that the old creeds meant something less by the word "Person" than it suggests to us; and intended only to mark three distinct parts which the Divine nature plays relatively to the universe and to us. However true the explanation, it leaves the thing explained worse than it was before; for if the Personal attributes, as we understand them, are absent from the members of the triad, where are they to be found? *Who* thinks the divine thoughts? *who* wills the divine acts? whither am I to fly for the Living Mind that answers to my own, Spirit to spirit? If these characteristics are disclaimed for the *personal* elements of the scheme, it is surely vain

to seek them in the *non*-personal; and they must simply be without determinate place in it *anywhere*, and float unfixed in the spaces of the Divine Infinitude. And this is the simple truth: the language of the creeds is born of an ancient Pantheistic philosophy, which blurred all the lines between Thinker and Thought, between God and the World, between Spontaneity and Will, and never gained the complete conception of *Personality*, human or divine. This great and prolific idea, approached but not secured by Judaism, is the healthy product of modern times, the chief gain of our speculative intellect, and inspirer of our practical life; and a religion which does not provide for it—which, instead of borrowing anything from its light and power, only blinks at them and eludes them, and escapes under cover of the Greek ambrosial cloud, half-radiance, half-mist, confesses itself unequal to the wants of living humanity. The first essential then of a restored purity of worship was precisely the work to which our predecessors in the eighteenth century addressed themselves:—to clear the Personality of God, till it is simple as the unity of the soul; to sweep away the haze of ancient Pantheism, with the ecclesiastical mythology it holds: to take the eternal Son of God from heaven, and isolate the Father as the One Infinite Mind, the Sole Self-subsisting Life, the all-pervading Will, at whose disposal creation lies.

The first effect of this absolute loneliness of God inevitably was to exhibit the universe as a stupendous centralized monarchy, administered on one plan, and directed by one power. The provinces of the cosmos can thus have, as it were, no municipal life; the local agents no real independence: the whole hierarchy of place and rank is

but the receptacle and organ of a force given and transmitted: there can be no pause for remonstrance, no idea of resistance: the single impulse from the capital moves on its inexorable lines, and executes its errand at every station as it flies. Priestley's Necessarian type of doctrine was the natural result of his reduction of all causes to One, and his intense absorption in that One. When you plant yourself in thought at the Divine station, and look out thence through the universal fields, and take the clue now of this law, now of that, to conduct you through the maze of phenomena, the whole system, reduced to miniature at that height, must appear as one, with man as a minor organism swept along in its current of force: its scientific programme will construct itself within your imagination, filling up its vacancies as the prospect clears; till the whole appears to you as a mighty machine of Divine invention, the vehicle of predetermined methods, and the depository of predetermined ends. So long as the Unity of the Divine agency was in question, and was threatened with the partnership of coequal powers, this Religion of Causation, which indignantly expelled all "fellow-workers" and all withstanders of the Most High, met the wants of the time, and fostered a sublime and comprehensive piety. You pass through an experience at once subduing and exalting, when you part from all realities but the Supreme, and find yourself with him alone; when the throng of secondary causes ceases to distract and to conflict, and as it sinks into semblance, drops into the lines of an eternal order; when you try to empty the running waters and the sweeping winds and the teeming earth of any forces of their own, and bid them speak and look for him alone; when the passions of men rise up against you, and

you stand still and answer not, because they subside before your eye into a pulsation of his will; when the very thoughts you seem to think resolve themselves before you into phenomena of his life passing a conscious point of space; when, in short, life becomes to you a sacred dream, and history a soliloquy of God, and the possibility is gone of anything less than the Divine. As if to test, at once, the sustaining efficacy of this faith, its great apostle [1] in the eighteenth century was driven, the victim of ruinous outrage, from the country he had instructed and adorned; and never did they receive more impressive comment than in the lofty patience, the serene trust, the unexhausted benevolence, of the exile of Pennsylvania.

In vindicating the Sovereignty of the universal Father, this scheme subordinates the whole universe alike, and allows nothing to approach nearer to him than the web to him that weaves it: the threads may be of this colour or of that, in the warp or in the woof; but all are interwoven in the same texture, and hold a homogeneous relation to the Maker. Man, therefore, is not less exclusively a part of nature than the birds and the plants; is worked up in the same way into the organism of the world; and though he may have a larger consciousness, containing within itself more successive links in the chain of production, is equally the theatre of their predetermined order, and powerless to give them an alternative direction. He too, like all else, is as the clay to the potter, to be moulded by another; and be the pressure on the inside or on the out, he is shaped and does not shape himself. Since

[1] Dr. Joseph Priestley, *b.* March 13, 1733; *d.* February 6, 1804.

he is sensitive, and can be turned hither and thither by the touch of pleasure and of pain, he is *manageable* and may be broken in; but, since he cannot help going whither the given impulses take him, he is not *responsible*. The treatment of him may be *disciplinary*, but cannot be *moral*; you may pity him, but cannot blame him; and he may feel regret, but never compunction. If this is his aspect in the human view, still more must it be in the Divine: how can God, who meant him to be exactly what he is, call him to account, or look on him with less complacency than if he had been different? And so, the moral sentiments which are superseded on earth disappear from heaven; and he, whose name was once "Righteous," and "Holy," merges all his perfections in "Benevolence." Nor does there seem room, upon this scheme, for any *personal* relations between us and God, whether of *similitude* or of *communion*. For that which constitutes him a *Personal* Being is precisely that Free originating power, of which we have none, and which, centred all in his nature, leaves him the only *Person* in the universe, and us but a complicated sort of *things*. In the only attribute which gives him *character*, we can never be like him: and we have no independent standing-place from which we may speak with him, face to face: no private closet where we can enter and shut the door; if we kneel down, it is on his prompting ground: if we sigh, it is his breathing: if we pray, the words move the wrong way, and flow from him, not to him: he possesses us behind and before: and turn, and look, and implore, and weep as we may, it is still his own drama under masquerade. From this theory, it is plain, the "eternal decrees" have not yet taken their departure; by the touch

of Benevolence, they have lost indeed their *cruelty*, but not their *absoluteness;* and something else is needed, ere we meet the presence of him to whom arose the night-cry of Gethsemane.

The reaction naturally came from the other end of the relation between us and God. As, in the *Religion of Causation*, Man seemed to be crushed into a mere creature, so was it on his behalf that remonstrance broke forth, and at the bidding of Channing [1] the *Religion of Conscience* sprang to its feet. However fascinating the precision and simplicity of the Necessarian theory in its advance through the fields of physical and biological law, it meets with vehement resistance in its attempt to annex human nature, and put it under the same code with the tides and trees and reptiles. Our personality, though frightened and dwindled for a moment and hardly believing its own voice, is sure to recover from the most ingenious philosophy, and to reassert its power over the alternatives before it, and own its obligation to the authority within it; and the second period of our theology is marked by this recovered sense of Moral Freedom. When the tones of the New England prophet reached us here, why did they so stir our hearts? They brought a new language; they burst into a forgotten chamber of the soul; they recalled natural faiths which had been explained away, and boldly appealed to feelings which had been struck down; they touched the springs of a sleeping enthusiasm, and carried us forward from the outer temple of devout science to the inner shrine of self-denying Duty. The very inspiration of the new Gospel, in what thought does it lie? *The greatness of human capacity*, not so much for

[1] William Ellery Channing, *b.* April 7, 1780; *d.* October 2, 1842.

intellectual training as for voluntary righteousness, for victory over temptation, for resemblance to God; a greatness attested, on the terrible side, by the power to incur *guilt*, to choose ruin, to resist the Supreme Will. The interval between our lowest possible sin and our highest possible holiness is infinite, and can be expressed by no physical contrast of hell and heaven; and that interval measures the range of our power and the solemnity of our trust. Of this vast scale of possibility we have notice given to us in the aspirations and the remorse of conscience; whence we well know that our sins are more than mistakes, and our self-conquests more than prudence; that both are our own, and we are shaped into neither; that by the one we sink into mere nature, by the other we rise towards God. Thus regarded, moral distinctions, no longer resolved into mere sentient ones, are reinstated in their independent reality, and the apprehension of them becomes the supreme dignity of all minds. There is one and the same righteousness for the whole hierarchy of spiritual natures, and the free love of it and life in it is the bond of their glorious commonwealth. Here it is that Man is truly "the *image* of God," and not his moulded *creature* merely. In proportion as he attains goodness, purity, disinterested love, and strength to negative the wrong, does he really reflect the Divine lineaments in little, and enter upon an actual sympathy with the Holiest of all; and the essential perfection the Parent-Mind repeats itself in the child, and kindles his features with a lustre of the heavens. Under the light of this faith the history of mankind is no longer a mere branch of the physical development of the world, the last chapter in the natural history of species; but broadly distinguishes itself from

these, and appears on a different stage as a drama of real probation; whose great criminals, tyrants, and impostors we are not bound to pity like the sufferers of loathsome disease in an infirmary, but may abhor and denounce as enemies rather than victims of God; and whose heroes and saints we may regard as something more than animated figures handsomely constituted and finely tempered for their work, and visit with our natural praise and reverence, as faithful representatives in time of the Eternal justice and purity. If you gaze down upon the human race from the Causal throne of the universe they are flung into insignificance and float as gleaming dust upon the air-current. But if from the interior of the human spirit you look up to the heaven of God, you find a possible divineness in man, and an affinity with the Original perfection, which dissipates the illusion of his littleness. Will, then, this sense of moral freedom, of the reality and greatness of our trust, turn us into Stoics, and set us up in self-gratulation and pride? We are told that so it must be, if we, as free persons, stand face to face with the Personal Unity of the Father who constitutes us his children; and that we can have no humility unless there be an eternal Son of God in heaven, to graft that grace upon us as a portion of his own! If we ask for a reason for this strange dictum, we are only told that it is impossible for a finite personality to be humble out of its own resources and reflections: the feeling must be divinely given. Who, then, is it that is said to make us partners in this lowly grace? The eternal and spotless Son of God! Is, then, humility possible in an Infinite personality, in One who stands only in presence of equal or of lower beings, and in whom failure has

never been and progress never can be; yet *not* possible to us in our finite strife and imperfection, who are for ever haunted by the ideal which we do not reach, who see an indefinite hierarchy of excellence above us, and who, in all our shortcomings, have day by day to spread our moral record before the Holiest of all? Surely, if there be a position and a mind in this universe, shut up within the tenderest shadows of humility, it is ours; and if it be true, as our critic affirms, that we, Unitarians, feel not these shadows, but lift a self-righteous head, may God give us better knowledge where we stand!

If now we put together the two types of doctrine which I have described, and make them into one so far as they are compatible, shall we find rest in a complete and adequate theology? Let us say, from the first, that God is sole Cause in the natural world; and from the second, that he is sole Cause except ourselves in the moral world, where we are permitted to be "fellow-workers" with him: is this a finished account of his relation to us? No. All this might be true: he might pervade all nature with his Presence and his Providence: he might invest our spirit with a share of his free will: and might then withdraw from our voluntary life, and leave us to work out our moral problem alone, and only in the end return to take account of our fidelity. In this case, each soul would be as a spiritual island planted out in the natural deep of things, beaten by the tides of Law that sweep around, but with autocratic power to turn their destructive force aside and make them serve its affluence and beauty. We should thus sustain real responsible relations to the heavenly Father, relations which he has planted us out to assume, and which he

will recall us to sum up:—but, meanwhile, we shall remain personally apart, and live as sons in a foreign land, executing the sacred trust they have brought from home. Is then our spiritual nature thus rounded off into self-sufficient isolation? and is it across a chasm without a bridge that we look to him, and feel after him in vain to find him? When we too are on the eve of our cross-bearing, and take up the words, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me," is it only of a *physical presence* that we speak, and must we faint and struggle on through the silence of our God? Many a path of life such moral desolation would turn into a dolorous way; nor could there well be a more pathetic lot than to believe in a Father of our spirits and to think him out of reach. But what is to fasten upon us so miserable a dream? Is it the nightmare of Law that sits upon our breast, and turns our cry for him into a helpless shriek? We have but to open our eyes, and the ghost is gone, and we draw breath in the sweet morning light. Law reigns inflexibly through the natural life, and, if that were all, would reign inflexibly everywhere. But there is in us that which is above the natural life, and apprehends what lies beyond it; and just as God is not imprisoned in the universe, but transcends it, and in that outlying realm is hindered by no pledge from acting freely out of fresh affections, so have we a range of free ideal life, whence we can look down upon the instincts of nature and up to the infinite Holiness, and which we know is in subjection to nothing inflexible. This is precisely what we mean by *Spirit*—this liberty to move alternatively out of the thought and love of a reasonable mind: God is a Spirit, in so far as he is not locked up in the invariable order of

the world: and there is a spirit in Man, in so far as he is not disposed of by his organism and his dwelling-place, but rises in thought and directs himself in affection to what is above them. Here, then, it is that there is room for true communion—that Spirit may meet spirit—and that the sacred silence may itself speak the exchange of love. Our moral ideals, the irrepressible sigh after higher perfection, the sense of Divine authority in every vision of the better, the shame at every yielding to the worse, these, we are well aware, are not of our making, or donations of other men; they are *above us;* they are *given to us;* they are what draw us to God, and commence our likeness to him. In this field of spiritual affection that lies around our will, the common essence of man and God, the Divine element that spreads its margin into us, has its home, its life, its reciprocal recognition; its bursts of human prayer, its answer of Divine compassion; its deep shadows of contrition, and returning gleams of restoration. The life with God, then, of which saintly men in every age have testified, is no illusion of enthusiasm, but an ascent, through simple surrender, to the higher region of the soul, the very watch-tower whence there is the clearest and the largest view. The bridge is thus complete between the Divine and the human personality; and we crown the religion of *Causation*, and the religion of *Conscience*, by the religion of the *Spirit*. If we, in our poverty of thought, have had to take them up successively, all of them together have the authority of him "in whom all fullness dwells," and can never be wanting in us except as we fail of "the full stature of Christ." We know with what meaning the lily of the field looked up into his eye; and if the robe

of beauty on the earth was to him no dead product of the seasonal machine, but woven by the living hand of God, he sanctioned the piety which resolved the creative agencies back into the Creator's. We know with what strong crying and tears he could expostulate with heaven, and wrestle, as it were, will with will, in the hour of temptation and of agony, yet, as a Son, learn obedience through that which he suffered, and end with the calm words, "Not my will, but thine, be done"; and alike in the strife and in the surrender, we have his witness to the reality of that Moral conflict in which Sin is always possible, and filial self-sacrifice is the only victory. We know how he fed the secret springs of his gentle and holy life, and sought upon the hills and in the night for the loneliest confidences with the Hearer of Prayer, and with mingling confines of personality, felt himself in the Father and the Father in him and his; and we must own in him the supreme witness to the spiritual union of man with God;—a union which, were it constant as in him, might be deemed an Incarnation; but, where transient and intermittent, as with our lower fidelity, appears rather as a dispensation of the Spirit.

Thus, then, the Unitarian protest, which perhaps begun with too great and monarchical a separation of our world from heaven, comes round at last to a reunion of the human and Divine. And in the cycle which it has run there is a curious recovery, as it were, of the functions of Trinity without its paradoxes, only with the drama transferred from the individuality of Christ to the life of humanity. We have traversed, and at length united, the relations of *creature to the Creator*, of *Son to Father*, of *weak and tempted to the all-quickening Spirit*; and may we not say that thus, without confusing

the nature of God, we have enriched and ennobled our religious comprehension of Man, and provided for a more balanced justice to the claims of Nature, of Conscience, and of the Soul, and a blending consecration for them all? If an expanding faith brings us, as we think, an ampler peace, let it stir us also to a deeper fidelity, and if those who know us not still drive us from the sacred enclosure and treat us as wanderers from the Christendom we love, all the more let us fling ourselves into the embrace of the Only True, and still say: "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer: thy name is from everlasting" (Isaiah lxiii. 16).

III

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By Sydney Herbert Mellone

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UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

It is well known that we are in the midst of a vast movement of change in religious thought and life, a movement of mingled construction and destruction, whose beginnings, if we can date them at all, are from the Reformation, and whose end no man living can foresee.

This movement is not the work specially of any one of the various religious bodies as compared with others. It has had many simultaneous beginnings. No denomination, sect, or party, no single group of men, can claim as their own peculiar privilege to have originated it or to guide it. Even those religious communities who have been unconscious of this movement as concerning themselves, and some who have bitterly fought against it, have been deeply affected by it. They have moved like that party of explorers in the Arctic regions, who were travelling to the north over what seemed a limitless expanse of ice, which, though they did not know it, was a vast ice-floe, drifting slowly but irresistibly to the south, and carrying all on its surface with it. Such movements, in the minds of men, cannot long proceed as a mere unconscious drift. History shows us how often a number of tendencies, existing already in a half-conscious state, more or less suddenly become conscious of themselves collectively, and of their combined mission. In the process of time, this has taken place in so

many different religious bodies, and from so many different points of view, that there is an accumulated aggregate of unconcerted movements, all alike demanding religious reform and reconstruction.

(i) *Authority and Spiritual Freedom.*

Four centuries ago the Church Catholic had spread out her arms to clasp, if it might be, the entire world in her embrace. There was no part of human life from the cradle to the grave which she did not control and direct. Her power was the result of long ages of gradual growth, and it had taken a firm hold both of the heart and the intellect of man. The essential characteristic of the Church was the note of the Absolute and the Eternal sounding through her dogmas, her ordinances, her ritual. In this spirit she set herself to crush the slightest dissent from her doctrines, the least sign of resistance to her authority.

Then the spirit of the Modernists of old time broke loose from the tombs their disciples had built for them; but, more than in an earlier age, it impelled them to destroy as it inspired them to create. Luther in Germany, and Calvin in Geneva, and Knox in Scotland, and the Sozzini in Italy, and others elsewhere, arose and declared that there was no more help in the Saints, that the Pope was Antichrist, and the Catholic Church full of corruption and wickedness. Such words were often uttered with wrath and bitterness, and to many a tender heart, many a pure conscience, seemed horrible blasphemies. But the abuses of the Papal system were many and were confessed; and the mind of man could not remain for ever in leading-strings to the Pope and his emissaries.

In place of the Church, the Reformers pointed to the Book. Here is the paradox of historic Protestantism. Assuming that the Bible throughout not only contains, but is, the Word of God written, Protestantism initiated an era where in one generation creeds were produced which, in the voluminousness and minuteness of their dogmatism, exceeded all that the ancient Church had done in the first three hundred years of its life. At the same time, Protestantism recognized that the preservation of historic continuity and corporate unity may be too dearly bought; since all the historic abuses of ecclesiasticism may defend themselves under this plea.

In setting conscience free from servitude to the Church, Protestantism turned religion back on its sources in the soul. And in setting reason free to move in religious things within the limits of the Word, it forced to the front the further question of what those limits are, and prepared the way for another Reformation, quite equal in importance to the former one, though not attended with so many dramatic circumstances: a Reformation which has completely undermined the authority of the Bible as an infallible rule of faith and life.

If, then, there is no infallible Church to which to appeal in all matters of human controversy, if there is no infallible Book to guide us in all matters of belief and conduct and tell us with authoritative voice what we must believe and what we must do, what remains? Only this: as Dr. Martineau contended in his last great work, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, we must throw ourselves back upon the Reason and Conscience of Mankind as the only sure path to Truth and to God.

Unitarian thought has been deeply involved in this transforming change. Heretical opinion on

the subject of the Trinity, in the various shapes which it took in the sixteenth century, simply represented a thorough-going appeal to the Bible as against ecclesiastical authority. The early Unitarians took their stand passionately on the written word. Their conflict with their opponents was not over the authority but the interpretation of Scripture. Their anti-Trinitarianism and other apparent negations really rested upon and grew out of a great positive affirmation, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the supreme and sufficient rule of faith and life; and therefore they rejected theological doctrines which they did not find in the Bible or which were inconsistent with the character of God as revealed therein. The Bible is still with us: no longer an infallible rule, but a unique instrument of religious instruction and inspiration, with the effective working value naturally belonging to a literature moulded by the powerful religious genius of Hebrew lawgivers and prophets and primitive Christian apostles. But we can no longer use the Bible as our forefathers did. It is not enough to say that if it was permissible for Luther or Calvin to examine the interpretation put by the Catholic Church upon the Bible, it is equally permissible for us to examine Luther's or Calvin's interpretation, *the Bible remaining* where it was.

The late Charles Beard, in his Hibbert Lectures on "The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century," powerfully urged that we are but following Luther's example in testing religious ideas by the surest knowledge of our day: "What if it turns out that his work was only half done, and could be no more than half done with the materials at his command? What if the Bible shows by its history and structure that it is unfit to occupy

that seat of authority from which, in its favour, he displaced the Church? The truth is, that one Reformation always carries in it the seed of another. There are two elements in religion, the permanent and the transient, the divine and the human—a duality which rests upon the fact that what is given by God can only be partially apprehended by man; and it is necessary, in order that the permanent should shine out in its pure and simple splendour, that the transient should gradually drop away." [1] In like manner we may appeal to the fathers of Unitarian Christianity, when they took their stand passionately upon the written word, but read it with entire mental and spiritual independence in the light of Reason and Conscience alone. That is our spiritual heritage; but to-day it compels us to seek for the things of God not only within the pages even of the best and broadest of books.

(ii) *The Dogmas of the Past*

How, then, in the light of this sacred heritage of spiritual freedom, may we deal with the past? There are some who love the past, because it is ancient, and who find in the traditions and practices of the historic Christian Churches a mine of wealth whence we may draw, not fetters for the spirit, but precious symbols of spiritual realities. No wise man will neglect the testimony and experience of the past. Consider the work of the great apostle of the nations, Paul of Tarsus. He took every account of the past; but how? He read it in the light of his own life, and the life of his own people. He mingled it with his own original dreams, experiences, reflections—passed

[1] Beard, *Hibbert Lectures*, xii.

it through the fire of his own personality; and then gave it forth. The ideal of true progressive thought makes a great demand upon us. We have to preach the truth as it is in ourselves; not breaking with the past, but showing that in ourselves its force has been regenerated, recreated, redirected, made fruitful for the life the world is living now.

The root of the matter is this. Formerly the sources of religion were not only separated from human life, but regarded as being outside the utmost range of humanity, and were found in infallible persons and infallible books; but now the sources of religion are sought for in human life itself. The presentation of religion is now subject to all the uncertainties that belong to life, with its multitudinous variety, its illimitable possibilities, its unscaled heights and unsounded depths. Here in this manifold of human life, and here alone, are we to find our answer to the continual cry of the human heart — "Show us the Father." The desire of all the ages is concentrated in those words. We would see the Father at work; see in the blind struggles of men his eternal judgments, in man's persistent effort after wider truth his revealing wisdom, in man's ever-renewed devotion and loyalty to good his redeeming love. We would see him through the mighty and majestic order of nature, so as to be able to say, "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee."

An Anglican theologian of the "Modernist" school has said that the task of Christian thinkers consists in "the application of criticism to the ancient dogmas in order to disengage their vital principle, and prepare for this vital principle a new expression"—in setting free their living

principle from the decaying form in which it is enclosed, and preparing for it new forms in harmony with modern culture.[1] With this he contrasts the attitude of the Modern Unitarian, who is supposed to apply to dogma only the solvent power of a destructive criticism. The question then is, Does Unitarianism, as a matter of method, theory, and principle, necessarily imply this attitude to the traditional dogmas of the Christian Church? I answer that it does not. It is true that much evidence might be produced apparently in favour of such statements; but those who are in touch with the actual facts can see that their significance is other than what he takes it to be.

The attitude of mere denial is not usually the expression of a general theory about the history of Christian dogma. Sometimes it may be that; and when it is, it can call one of the greatest living authorities on the subject to support the contention that historic Christian dogmas are a superfluous excrescence on the original idea of Christianity, and, where not superfluous, positively mischievous.[2] The present writer does not share this " pessimistic " view of the history of Christian thought; but the point is, that Unitarianism does not necessarily imply it. The reaction against traditional dogmas in their rigid orthodox form is often a reaction against personal experience of their insufficiency for life and their conflict with conscience, reason, and knowledge; and perhaps more often against experience of personal bigotry and intolerance on the part of orthodox men. I need not dwell on these things. No man knows

[1] *The Hibbert Journal*, January, 1922, pp. 211, 215.

[2] Harnack, *History of Dogma* (Eng. tr.), throughout; see also Hatch, *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages on the Christian Church.*

the full extent of the indifference, infidelity, atheism, which has been directly created and promoted by that narrow-heartedness of the bigot which makes his very sincerity hateful.

As to the historic aspect of the question, we may say with the late Phillips Brooks that "it is not conceivable that any Council, however œcumenically constituted, should so pronounce on truth that its decrees should have any weight with thinking men save what might seem legitimately to belong to the character and wisdom of the persons who composed the Council; personal judgment is on the throne, and will remain there—personal judgment, enlightened by all the wisdom, past and present, which it can summon to its aid, but forming finally its own conclusions, and standing by them in the sight of God, whether it stands in a great company or stands alone." [1]

(iii) *A Twofold Tradition*

Unitarian Christianity, therefore, cannot be traced to any single teacher or any specific date. It had its sources in the thoughts of many minds in many lands. But the fundamental condition in every case was the same: the *circulation of the Bible in the vernacular*. Official Protestantism rejected the authority of the Church of Rome; but it read the Bible in the light of the ancient creeds; and bigotry and intolerance were not exorcised at the Reformation. The first religious reactions against traditional ecclesiastical dogma took shape among men and women who insisted on reading the Bible in the light of reason and conscience alone. The historical affiliation of Unitarian Chris-

[1] See his Essay on "Orthodoxy" in the volume entitled *Essays and Addresses*.

tianity with the free study and interpretation of the Bible can be traced both in England and America.

Events in the religious world in England in the seventeenth century afford a convenient illustration. For several generations the independent study of the Bible had been a source of many "heresies," which at length threatened to destroy the whole ecclesiastical order of the National Church, doctrinal, governmental, and ceremonial. To silence these conflicts, the "Act of Uniformity" was passed and became law in May, 1662.

In addition to the imposition of Episcopal Ordination, this Act insisted on Assent and Consent to everything contained in and prescribed by the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. The Prayer Book itself had been hastily revised, immediately before the passing of the Act, and many of the six hundred alterations made appear to have been devised with the express purpose of driving the Puritans out. The result was that over two thousand beneficed clergymen and a number of endowed schoolmasters were deprived of their livings. By far the most famous among them was Richard Baxter, who represents the spirit of the Ejected at its best. He stood for pure Christianity against sects and parties. He adopted an ancient maxim: "In things essential, unity; in things not essential, liberty; in all things, charity." He had indeed no idea of complete toleration. Socinians and Papists were regarded by him as "intolerable." But his outlook widened. His intellectual keenness, honesty, and self-criticism, his desire for comprehension, his recognition of degrees of certainty, and of the difference between essentials and non-essentials all led further, and went on working after his

death. He stood for the attempt to *find a basis of agreement by reducing the number of essentials and fundamentals;* and this was the first step on a great adventure. In Baxter and all the best of the ejected ministers there were germs of enlightened conviction, which time and experience have since fructified to greater issues than were dreamt of in their day.

They were called "Presbyterian," but the name has no proper application to them. Baxter used it mostly as a vague negative term meaning "non-episcopalian." By many others it was often used as a political rather than an ecclesiastical designation: "Exit Jack Presbyter," wrote a courtly Anglican after the Act of 1662. The ejected ministers were essentially Puritans, but Puritans at their best. On the other hand, they are not to be confused with the Independents, who, agreeing largely with them in religious belief, voluntarily stood aloof from any National Church, and who are represented, in essentials, by the first Puritan settlers in New England. The "Presbyterians" were excluded from the National Church by the setting up of new, arbitrary, and tyrannical terms of conformity. Eventually they made common cause with the Independents, but this was due to circumstances of a later date.

Among the various influences forming the tradition of Unitarian Christianity there are two which stand out as equally characteristic, distinctive and essential: the demand for *personal spiritual freedom*, and the demand for *clear, definite, and coherent religious thought and teaching*. The demand for personal spiritual freedom, so far as England is concerned, can be traced directly to the great upheaval of 1662. Indeed the actual history of a considerable number of Unitarian

Churches in England is linked to the passing of the Act of Uniformity. But in order to create these Churches, it was necessary for another tributary stream to bring another influence into the main current of the river: leading to the demand for clear, definite, and coherent religious thought and teaching.

Many of the ejected clergy were hopeful that the National Church might become comprehensive enough to include them once more. But some of them in the exercise of their freedom and independence were giving up their allegiance to the ancient creeds. They were coming to regard "the Trinitarian scheme" as a corruption of primitive Christianity. By "the Trinitarian scheme" they meant not only the doctrine of the Deity of Christ, but the whole "Scheme of Salvation" and the doctrines on which it rested—Original Sin, Eternal Punishment, and Vicarious Atonement. They perceived the harm that was being done to Christianity by the orthodox theology still maintained in the great bodies around them; and this prepared the way for a more human Christ, for a more rational view of the Bible, and for a larger hope of salvation for all mankind. Meanwhile, whether they spoke or remained quiet, their views were attacked, and they were excluded from Christian fellowship.

The demand for *lucid and definite religious thought and teaching* took shape under these circumstances during the course of the eighteenth century, and gained in strength towards its close. It came from the minds of men who had been influenced by the almost too logical and sharply reasoned theology of the famous Polish Unitarian thinkers. There were many among the Liberal Dissenters who felt the need for a definite and

coherent theology plainly stated. The powerful advocacy of Unitarian Christianity by Joseph Priestley, himself brought up as an Independent, and the withdrawal of Theophilus Lindsey from the Church of England to establish a Unitarian Church in London (Essex Street, 1774), aroused the Liberal Dissenters to consider their position, and to a large extent they found that they had grown into Unitarian Christianity. The pamphlets and letters of the time show a deep sense of the duty to make their convictions known.

(iv) *The Essential and the Non-essential*

These historical observations indicate the most concrete and fruitful way of dealing with the question of what Unitarian Christianity means to-day. We must, for the moment, disregard the denominational or institutional side of the question, and concentrate on the meaning of Unitarian Christianity as a system or method of belief.

It is evidently useless to attempt to answer the question by naming some principle which is held or professed by every type of Christian thought. If we say, for instance, that "Unitarianism stands for belief in God," we have failed to distinguish it from any monotheistic religious system, Christian or non-Christian. We must therefore make the question more precise. What is *distinctive* of Unitarianism as a system or method of belief? Several things might be named as distinctive, but which of these is the most important, the most central and fundamental? What we are asking for, I repeat, is something which distinguishes Unitarian Christianity from other types of Christianity.

The distinctive factor may be something held by Unitarians and denied by Christendom at large, or vice versa; or it may be some great belief or principle of religious faith which is at least professed by Christendom at large, and also held by Unitarians: but by them placed relatively to other principles and problems of faith in a position different from that in which most Churches place it.

This second possibility proves to be the reality. Unitarians take the time-honoured distinction between the essential and the non-essential, and apply it to the problems of faith so radically and thoroughly as to create a distinctive outlook on religion. The non-essential is not necessarily false: it is not despised or rejected: it is to be understood, valued, used—for what it is worth; but it is never to be used as the essential is used. A creed-bound type of Christianity is not free to do this, unless the creeds are treated so freely that they cease to be a real bond of union and cease to give any indication of the real beliefs held by the members of the Churches where these creeds are professed; and in this case their very *raison d'être* has disappeared.

Here we begin to see the positive meaning of Unitarian freedom. It enables us to lay the emphasis upon the essential things. The expression seems commonplace. And yet, "emphasis" is of absolute importance in the practical affairs of life. Indeed, systematic lying on a vast scale could be carried out by simply emphasizing some truths to the neglect of others; while, on the other hand, the deepest and most helpful truths can be made effective by an emphasis in the right direction. Emphasis makes all the difference between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, sanity and madness.

(v) *What are the Essentials?*

The very essence of the Unitarian gospel, the foundation on which the whole structure is built, the binding force which alone gives it whatever cohesion it possesses, is the Fatherhood of God. The Fatherhood of God: not as an object of lip-service, not as a comfortable generalization to be listened to, or a vague theme of merely emotional assent; but as a great Ideal, whose meaning demands realization alike in personal, social, national, and international life: carrying with it, spiritually and even logically, the Divine Sonship and Brotherhood of Man—and this, once more, not merely as a Truth to be assented to, but as an Ideal to be realized, a task to be achieved.

The great thing needed for our deliverance is that our divine sonship shall be to us not only a truth to be acknowledged, but a reality to be enjoyed. This is the heart of vital religion. But this contact with God—which for want of a better word I have thus called "enjoyment"—though it is necessarily individualized, can be no exclusive possession. It must be continuous, pervasive, purposive. Continuous: it is not to be found in any mere moments of ecstasy. Pervasive: there is no place where God can be left out; in buying and selling, something in what you give or receive is part of the price of a human soul; and to neglect that is to leave God out. Purposive: it must have an object—the moral transformation of the world by means of the transformation of individuals. Whatever else it may be, this is no cheap and easy gospel. None the less, we affirm that it is the first among the essential things.

It is a gospel which prompts our rational nature to raise questions, theological, philosophical, even speculative. To these questions, some of the greatest minds of our race have devoted earnest thought; and the historic creeds of Christendom offer answers. Neither the questions nor the answers are to be despised or neglected; but they belong to the non-essentials. They are to be understood, valued, used—for what they are worth; but never to be used as the essential thing is used. And to use them to divide and exclude from one another men who are at one in the essential thing is to sin against the light.

This Gospel of the Fatherhood of God is essential Christianity. It is the essence of the Galilean Gospel. Jesus of Nazareth, so far as our knowledge goes, first made of the Fatherhood of God not merely an idea but a force in life. It is the influence of his personality and teaching that makes the New Testament to-day the richest mine of moral inspiration and insight that has been given to the world.[1]

In confessing the ideals which are central in the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, we acknowledge his leadership. But the philosophical interpretation of what that leadership implies in reference to his personality—and it is this kind of interpretation which largely occupies the historic creeds of Christendom—this, we affirm, is for religion not primary but secondary.

"What think ye of Christ?" The question was never more vital than it is to-day. A typical Unitarian answer is given in the words of Theodore Parker's hymn:

[1] Compare Mellone, *The New Testament and Modern Life.* London, The Lindsey Press, 1921.

" O thou great Friend to all the sons of men
Who once appeared in humblest guise below,
Sin to rebuke, to break the captive's chain,
And call thy brethren forth from want and woe.

We look to thee : thy Truth is still the Light
Which guides the nations, groping on their way,
Stumbling and falling in disastrous night,
Yet hoping ever for the perfect day.

Yes, thou art still the Life; thou art the Way
The holiest know : Light, Life and Way of heaven,
And they who dearest hope, and deepest pray,
Toil by the Light, Life, Way, which thou hast given."

This is a confession of the religious value of Jesus; it is an acknowledgment of his leadership. But a Christology as a formed and fixed theological conception, as it were a *definition* of the personality and power of Jesus, is a conception of another kind. It raises questions of history, psychology, philosophy. It shares the imperfection of all human definitions. It cannot belong to the things which are for religion essential.

(vi) *Was the Word " made Flesh " ?*

This brings us directly to the doctrine of the Incarnation. The doctrine is referred to here, not in order to discuss it adequately, or to develop the form in which, for example, the present writer would be disposed to defend it;[1] but in order to show that *the doctrine from its very nature cannot be classed among the essentials.*

The essence of the doctrine of the Incarnation, as held by modern Evangelical Christians, is expressed in the Pauline phrase, " God was in Christ,

[1] The writer may be permitted to refer to an Essay entitled " Athanasius the Modernist," in *The Price of Progress*, London, 1925, p. 69.

reconciling the world to himself," and from this point of view a serious criticism is brought against Unitarian Christianity. The following is a typical statement :

"The Unitarian conception of Christ is one which, if adopted by Christians generally, would enormously lower the vitality and saving power of the Church. . . . Whenever and wherever the Christian Church has made little of Jesus Christ, it has failed as a saving power. Whenever and wherever the Christian Church has made much of Him, it has been vital and vigorous." [1]

These are serious statements, and must be brought to the bar of logic and fact. Unfortunately, the meaning of the most important words, on which their force depends, is left in doubt. What is the "Unitarian valuation of Christ" which is thus destructive of moral and spiritual energy? What is meant by "making much" of Jesus or "making little" of him? What is meant by "saving power"? During the last ten years events have taken place which will not soon be forgotten; and the Church, which for twenty centuries has placed the Pauline phrase or its equivalent in the forefront of her teaching, was no more capable of influencing the course of events than a cork floating on the waves could divert the currents that carry it. The impotence of the Church is an astounding fact in the modern world. Is this because "much" or "little" has been "made" of Christ?

I may answer the able writer (quoted above) in other words of his own. After explaining that there is not a vast gulf between the Divine nature and human nature; that God and man are akin;

[1] *Hibbert Journal,* January, 1922, p. 213 (from an able article by the Rev. Henry D. A. Major, editor of *The Modern Churchman*).

that God reveals himself to man not through the abnormal but through the normal (" with the eye of faith He is seen . . . supremely in human personality "), the author proceeds :

> " It is these convictions which lead the Modernist to believe in a perfectly human and non-miraculous Christ, but yet a Christ no less truly Divine. And the Modernist holds that in the light of historical and scientific research this Gospel of the Divine Humanity is not only more credible to the modern mind, but presents a more adequate conception of the Incarnation than does the mediæval view."

Such statements are closely akin to characteristic utterances of the leading Unitarian thinkers of England and of America. Martineau's attitude is specially noteworthy; because while these principles evidently appealed to him and seemed to him to be of real religious importance, they fall into the background in his technical philosophical treatises. None the less he repeatedly dwells on them in letters to friends; they are many times set forth in the *Seat of Authority*, especially in the great central chapter on " Natural and Revealed Religion "; and in his ninetieth year were repeated once more, in a plea for the extension of the Incarnation idea from *the person of Christ* to the *nature of man*.[1]

It may be urged that the very word Incarnation is an awkward Latinism, that no corresponding word is used by the Greek Fathers, and that the religious truths which are involved could be better expressed by avoiding the word altogether. The reply is that we are not limited to the use of that particular word to express the idea. Martineau, for example, did not often use it. He perceived,

[1] *Life and Letters of James Martineau*, vol. ii. p. 481. The passage referred to occurs in a review of the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour's " Foundations of Belief," which was published in the *Nineteenth Century*, April, 1895.

of course, that the same thought could be expressed in different ways; thus:

"I can find no rest in any view of Revelation short of that which pervades the Fourth Gospel . . . that it is an appearance, to beings who have something of the divine Spirit within them, of a yet diviner without them, leading them to the divinest of all, which embraces them both." [1]

Martineau adds that this view is everywhere "implicated in the folds of the *Logos* doctrine,"—the doctrine of "the Word made Flesh."

Whether we speak of "the universal incarnation"; or whether—with Justin the Martyr in the second century and James Martineau in the nineteenth—we speak of the *Logos spermatikos*, the Divine Word scattered everywhere abroad and sown as a Seed of Life within the intellect and heart of mankind; or whether—in more familiar words—we speak of the universality and inspiring power of God's Holy Spirit, we are clothing in different forms of language one and the same great thought. To bind this thought down to any single verbal expression of it or any limitation of its meaning is to sin against the light. What the world needs is that the central thought itself shall be realized in mind and spirit and made a power in life.

The "worship of Jesus" is a difficult subject to handle, because "worship" may mean various and very different things. It may mean liturgical adoration of Christ in public worship, and petitionary prayer addressed to him. Unitarians believe that such worship in relation to Jesus is as much idolatry as it would be in relation to Socrates or Isaiah. Yet where such worship of Jesus is excluded, there are some who feel "the chilling influence of a great negation." What is the negation? It can only be that Jesus is a "mere man." But Unitarians believe that there is no

[1] *Life and Letters*, vol. i. p. 131.

such thing as a "mere man." But if the very phrase implies an anti-Christian view of human nature, it does not in the least follow that such worship of Jesus is justifiable.

Ceremonial adoration and prayer, addressed to Christ, in public or private, is not the only meaning of "worship." In common usage "worship" means not only "reverent homage or service paid to God"; it may mean "adoration or devotion *comparable to this* felt or shown towards a person, or a principle"; as when we speak, quite generally, of "an object of worship," or of the "worship" of rank, wealth, intellect, and so forth. It would be absurd to stigmatize as "idolatry" a feeling of reverence for Jesus as the Master in the things of the Spirit, or the communal expression of this feeling in recognized ways: provided such expressions of feeling are not made into exclusive tests for religious fellowship and so given a place among the essentials to which they have no right.

It is something more than interesting—it is a significant indication of the gradual movement of religious thought—when we find that our own conclusion may be expressed in the following words of an able Anglican theologian:

> "There is no single Christology so authoritative that it alone must be held in the Christian Church, and demanding that the teacher of any other Christology shall be faced with the alternatives of recantation or deprivation. . . . It is not ecclesiastical authority, but the *consensus fidelium*, the growing consciousness of worshipping, practising, and thinking Christians that must decide which, *if any*, of the competing Christologies is to become the dominant one in the Church's faith. This is a slow process, and in the best sense of that much misused word: it is a *democratic* process." [1]

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[1] *The Modern Churchman*, September, 1921, p. 199. We have italicized "if any."

(vii) *Is there a "Christ of Experience"?*

In modern times the experience of communion with the Living Christ is earnestly impressed upon us as the essence of the Christian religion, and not only in connection with certain crises of life, described as the "conviction of sin," "the sense of forgiveness," or "conversion." The whole sphere of the inner life and the uplifting of inward aspirations is referred to Christ, the one source of strength in our struggle with inner evil, or weariness, or doubt. And those who make this claim feel a response which guarantees the reality of the object of their faith and becomes a decisive witness of its truth. There is an apparent finality about this evidence which makes any attempt to analyze it seem like a rude intrusion into a sacred place, and

> "Like a man in wrath the heart
> Stands up, and answers 'I have felt.'"

Nevertheless we must point out that we have here not only an immediate experience or intuition which might be infallible, but an intuition *together with an interpretation of it* which cannot possibly be infallible; and those who do not share this special kind of experience must ask how to recognise the truth of the interpretation. The soul is in contact with a mighty spiritual Power other than itself, and yet within; and if this is the true form of Christian experience, we must press the question, How is this Power to be recognized? Why must we identify it with the historic figure of Jesus Christ rather than with the living God?

We find that those who are best qualified to speak for this variety of religious experience do not all speak with one voice. We turn the pages of *The New Life in Christ*, by the late Dr. Agar

Beet, a learned and eloquent Wesleyan divine. He affirms that the Power with whom the individual is in communion is no other than the Spirit of God. The Spirit dwells in the heart of the believer; the Spirit is the source of grace; the Spirit acts on our conscience and affection; and the Spirit is to be identified with Christ. We ask, What is the ground of this identification? For an answer we are referred to certain texts in the Epistles of the New Testament: texts the precise significance of which is far from certain, and which can be set by the side of other texts suggesting that Christ and the Holy Spirit are not to be identified. Once more, we turn to *The Living Christ*, by that fervent exponent of evangelical orthodoxy, the late Dr. R. W. Dale. He affirms the absolute self-sufficiency of the individual experience. Even though there were no written gospels, the verdict of individual experience, repeated many times in the souls of many believers, is enough. On the other hand, when we turn to *The Christ of Experience*, by the late Dr. D. W. Forrest, an able and learned exponent of contemporary Presbyterian orthodoxy, we find a clear declaration that by no conscious distinction can the soul mark off its communion with Christ from communion with God.[1] How then do we know that Christ is there? Because of the witness of Scripture. Dr. Forrest affirms that the authority of Scripture is needed to regulate and guide what might otherwise be liable to extravagance or illusion. In other words, the experience of Christ

[1] The Dean of St. Paul's, in his Bampton Lectures on *Christian Mysticism*, refers to the doctrine of Henry Suso, that in the highest condition of union with God the experience of the soul transcends the distinction of Persons in the Godhead (*Christian Mysticism*, 1899, p. 178).

does not, after all, authenticate itself; it needs a recognized standard for its guarantee; and we are left in a position which cannot possibly be final. The spiritual experience is offered in vindication and support of the scriptural record, and yet the spiritual experience itself requires the support of the record which it was summoned to confirm.

The voices to which we have listened belong to a generation or more ago. But the same way of belief has been pursued by religious teachers of our own day, and has created a *liberal evangelical Christianity* showing new features and making new claims. It is an evangelicalism which insists on the distinction between the essential and the non-essential. It feels itself free to accept all that is sound and trustworthy in the achievements of historical and literary Biblical criticism. It does not even claim that the Gospels themselves are in every detail historical narratives. But it finds essential Christianity in the emotional reaction to a Supreme Personality revealed in the Gospels; on that emotional reaction everything else is based. The statements in the historic creeds are read in the light of it. The Jesus of the Gospels, even of the first three Gospels, is found to have "the Value of God."

This is declared to be the ultimate Court of Appeal, and the interpretation of the Atonement and of Christian duty are based solely on this experience. The position has thus been stated by one of the most attractive of the writers of the Ritschlian school: "When we speak of *the historical Christ*, we mean that personal life of Jesus which speaks to us from the New Testament, viewed as the disciples' testimony to their faith. Historical research can never give this nor take

it away; and when we have it we know that we are at one with the living Church in possessing that gift of God which brings about our redemption." [1]

While fully admitting that a great deal of what is best in modern Protestantism, in England and America, is implicitly based on this method of belief, I must in honesty affirm that it is nothing but glorified "religious impressionism." The saying may seem a hard one; but when we follow out the implications of this method, we find Christianity reduced to little more than a matter of temperament; and it is indeed strange to find able religious thinkers describing this interpretation of Christianity as pre-eminently "historical."

The greater part, or numerically the greater part, of Christendom has fashioned its faith on lines other than those of evangelical orthodoxy. The secret of strength has been found not in the pure individualism of direct communion between the soul and the Saviour, but in the Catholic conception of sacramental communion, where the stress falls upon the Church with its hierarchy, sometimes conceived as itself the mystic body of Christ. Here, the basis is not so much the unity of the individual soul with the heavenly Christ, as its organic unity with all men, or at least with all believers. The central idea of Eucharistic devotion is still the Passion; but it is worked out in a totally different way. In the daily sacrifice of the Mass it is repeated in bloodless fashion on tens of thousands of altars, and the believer in communicating is taught that he actually feeds upon his Lord. And we know that a faith just as exalting and just as purifying can

[1] Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God*, Eng. tr. Bk. II, ch. i. § 5.

gather round these ideas as round the characteristic conceptions of evangelical Protestantism.

If the incidents of impassioned experience are to be made the basis of faith, let the student consider the work wrought, for example, by Catherine of Siena, in the fourteenth century, on her turbulent age. Most of her religious experiences—her frequent divine colloquies with Jesus Christ, her intimate converse with him and his endowment of her with miraculous power to share in his sufferings—would be set down by physicians as the hallucinations of a hysterical fanatic, and by many psychologists to-day as the creation of bodily instincts unnaturally suppressed. And all the while, in the midst of intense bodily pain, she is sustained with a holy joy as she tends the sick and plague-stricken, ministers to the lepers, heals the feuds of the nobles, conducts an immense correspondence, reconciles the enemies of the State, and at length, by sheer might of spiritual influence, in the face of a corrupted papal court, brings back Gregory VII from the "Babylonish captivity" at Avignon to Rome. No one can follow the phases of this extraordinary union of the mystical and the practical without the conviction that her energy was fed from unseen springs.

If it be said that in this case the religious mysticism and the practical achievements are altogether exceptional and abnormal, turn to Paris in the seventeenth century. Here is Madame Guyon, rich, beautiful, accomplished, but unhappily married: offering herself to Christ that she may be of one mind with him, accepting as her marriage portion the temptations and sorrows, the cross and the contempt, which fell to him, and finding the secret of strength in sorrow and suffering in the august privilege of the Eucharist.

So we might proceed; but it is enough to turn the pages of William James' *Gifford Lectures*—lingering for a while over the two wonderful chapters on "Saintliness"—to realize the meaning of the fact that not only within the limits of the New Testament have we "One Gospel in many Dialects." [1] The Christian Churches, age after age, have produced fresh varieties of sacred speech, intelligible at least to their day and generation, in the exaltation of the few and the faith of the many.

(viii) *Solution of the Conflict: Symbolism*

Judged by their outward appearance the facts seem to lend little warrant to the assertion of one gospel in many dialects. We seem to hear a discordant chorus of many voices all claiming revelations which, based on intimate personal experience, must be inviolably true, and which, when with pains and trouble we have sorted them out, resolve themselves into a few mutually contradictory and mutually destructive beliefs.

The conflict arises from confusing together the reality of religious experience, as an event in the inner life, and the validity of the interpretation of it, formulated and expressed in language. The moment when we pass from experience to interpretation, the moment when we formulate, for example, the doctrine of "the Living Christ" or "the Christ of Experience," is the moment when, at any point, doubt and disputation, criticism and debate, may arise. Questions arise which cannot be met by simply falling back and asseverating, "I have felt."

In other words, religious experience is and must

[1] Martineau, *Studies of Christianity*, 1890, p. 399.

be essentially symbolic.[1] A symbol, as the term is here used, is a fact of experience *whose power springs from the real presence of the object symbolized but which so long as it remains a symbol cannot completely embody the object symbolized.* A religious symbol manifests the Real Presence of an object in some sense Divine.

A recent writer, in putting forward a crude criticism of a well-known philosophical theory regarding the nature of Time, asked: "Where is the *specimen* on which the allegation is founded?" The question has a certain suggestiveness for our present purpose. If human literature is inspired, there must be some literature representative and typical of this inspiration in those moral and spiritual things which are necessary for our salvation. If all days are ever to become holy and all places sacred, there must be some definite day and hour, some place accessible to all for such regulated and orderly meditation on divine things as may make them become a growing force in actual life. If the ideal of "natural supernaturalism" is ever to be realized among men, there must be some material things capable, though natural, of suggesting the supernatural; though material, of suggesting the spiritual.

The human need of realizing the "particular" presence of God does not require any metaphysical quality of uniqueness or finality in the realization. Indeed this follows from the nature of a religious symbol. If we may adopt, for this purpose, the definition given in the Anglican Catechism, a religious symbol is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." It reveals

[1] On this subject, see the present writer's Essay, "Symbolism in Religious Experience," in *The Price of Progress*, London, 1925, p. 147.

the spiritual fact *directly* but *partially*, and not with absolute finality and completeness. Such finality and completeness are no more necessary to the vitality of religion than they are to the vitality of art. Art is a conscious and concentrated endeavour to embody the spiritual in the material. Hence the appropriateness of the word *ποίησις*, poesy, creation. The works of great artists are really alive. They have a soul, which the material form at once *conceals and reveals*. From architecture to music there is not an art which is not symbolic. The artist gives to the material thing a power born in his own soul, to appeal to the inner life and feeling of those who contemplate it. It produces in us the feeling, the faith, the enthusiasm which the poet himself experienced in creating it. And if this is true of art, it is yet more true of Morality and Religion. These central activities of the human spirit can only express themselves by means of symbols—by seeking some outward and visible form and dominating it to express their own meanings and purposes, really and directly, but never exhaustively.

Nevertheless it is just this quality of finality and completeness which the Church has insisted upon as vital.

The decisive illustration of what the claim means may be found in the declaration of the Creed of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) :

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, at once perfect and complete in Godhead and perfect and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man of a rational soul and body; one in essence with the Father as regards his Godhead . . . and at the same time one in Essence with us as regards his manhood. . . . Proclaimed in two natures without confusion, without division or separation; the difference of the two natures being in no way destroyed on account of the union, but rather the specific characteristics of each nature being preserved in one Person."

The Eternal and Infinite God was completely and exhaustively embodied at one particular period in history. This theory of the nature of Jesus Christ goes beyond Symbolism. It is the final statement given by the Church of the dogma familiarly expressed in the proposition that "Jesus is God." The difficulties involved are sufficiently shown in the controversies of the century following the Council of Chalcedon; and in the subsequent revival of the *Kenosis* doctrine, that the Deity divested himself of certain divine attributes in becoming incarnate.

When we come to see what the Deity of Christ means practically for multitudes of devout Christians, we find that this belief is not assimilated as a theological or philosophical proposition, but in Ritschlian fashion as a "judgment of value," expressing the way in which the central Figure of the Gospels appeals to many hearts. They hold on to the traditional doctrine of the Deity of Christ because this grasp enables them to visualize God better; and they feel that in some way they must visualize God. Others are prepared to say frankly that they only know God through Christ: apart from Christ, God is to them only an unknown, an x.

In contrast to all this covert agnosticism, let us hear Martineau [1]:

"The whole world is held together by forces of natural reverence, grouping men in ten thousand clusters round centres diviner and more luminous than themselves. And if every family, every tribe, every sect may have its head and representative, excelling in the essential attributes that constitute the group, what hinders this law from spreading to a larger compass, and giving to *mankind* their highest realization, superlative in whatever is imitable and binding?"

[1] *Life and Letters*, vol. i. pp. 396–7; *Essays and Addresses*, vol. iii. pp. 34, 57.

And again :

"The Incarnation is true, not of Christ exclusively, but of man universally, and of God everlastingly. He bends into the human to dwell there: and humanity is the susceptible organ of the Divine. And the spiritual light in us, which forms our higher life, is *of one substance* with his own Righteousness—its manifestation, with unaltered essence and authority, on the theatre of our nature. Of this grand and universal truth Christ became the revealer, not by being an exceptional personage (who could be a rule for nothing), but by being a signal instance of it, so intense and impressive as to set fire to every veil that would longer hide it."

Thus may those who deny that "Jesus is God" find in Jesus the supreme symbol of God.

(ix) *What, then, of the Trinity?*

We have intentionally postponed to this late period of our discussion all reference to that famous doctrine of theology the denial of which is bound up with the etymological meaning of the name "Unitarian." To identify "Unitarian" and "anti-Trinitarian" is to empty the name of all positive meaning. Even if we understand Unitarian theism in its narrowest and most technical sense, we must at least give it a positive meaning. Unitarian theism implies at least the *unipersonality* of Deity. It affirms that there can only be one Personality, one individualized centre of consciousness, of absolutely divine nature or rank. In other words, it is *pure monotheism.*

This conception of Unitarian theism is essentially *abstract,* as well as narrow and technical. We have already pointed out that it gives an entirely inadequate view of the historical origins of Unitarian Christianity and of the historical conditions affecting its advance. As a matter of fact, it contains nothing *distinctive* of any particular

movement of religious thought. It excludes only those conceptions of Deity which affirm more than one personal centre of consciousness in the divine nature. It therefore excludes *tripersonality*, which the traditional doctrine of the Trinity attempts to affirm. It does not exclude even the most exalted conception of Christ's person, or the most limited conception, for it says nothing at all about Christ's person.

I have already urged that this technical meaning of the name "Unitarian" is inadequate. But if the name is to be tied down to this meaning, then the result is as we have stated it. I have introduced the point here in order to bring out a fact which is usually ignored. *The doctrine of Christ's person is logically independent of Trinitarianism* understood as an attempt to affirm the tripersonality of the Godhead. The introduction of the third personal centre of consciousness introduces boundless confusion into Christology. The attempt is thus characterized by a distinguished modern thinker:

"Few things are more disheartening to the philosophical student of religion than the way in which the implications of the doctrine of the Incarnation are evaded in popular theology by dividing the functions of Deity between the Father and the Son, conceived practically as two distinct personalities or centres of consciousness, the Father perpetuating the old monarchical ideal and the incarnation of the Son being limited to a single historic individual. Grosser still, however, is the materialism which has succeeded in transforming the profound doctrine of the Spirit, as the ultimate expression of the unity and communion of God and man, into the notion of another distinct Being, a third centre of consciousness mysteriously united with the other two." [1]

I quote this passage not because I personally

[1] Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God* (Gifford Lectures), 2nd edition, p. 410.

believe it to be conclusive (as I do), but in order to suggest the question whether a doctrine, which really needs to be defended against such a criticism from the side of philosophy, can possibly be regarded as belonging to the essentials of the Christian faith? But this is not all. It may be asked, with some reason, whether the history of Christian doctrine does not show that, in attempting to affirm tripersonality, the Church has wavered between an extension of Arianism with its triad of individuals, and an extension of Sabellianism with its triplicity of functions.[1]

The latter type of interpretation is evidently the more philosophical; and, as a matter of fact, philosophically minded theologians usually gravitate towards it. But it is not a doctrine of three Persons, three individualized centres of consciousness in one God. It is a doctrine of three fundamental orders of self-revelation or self-expression on the part of Deity in relation to the world. The doctrine of the Trinity advocated by modern Churchmen appears to be of this type: [2] though its precise drift will, I think, be clearer when modern Christian thinkers who defend the conception of a Divine Trinity in Unity explain their view of the historic difficulty of Trinitarianism—the relation and distinction between God the Eternal Son and God the Holy Spirit.

None the less, a Trinitarianism of the modernized "Sabellian" type may be actually stated as a definition of Unitarian theism. In our finite

[1] Cp. Dr. B. H. Streeter, "The Suffering of God," *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1914: "So far as the imagination of the Church is concerned, it is really the Arian who has triumphed."

[2] For an earlier statement, see a striking sermon by Canon Wilberforce, printed in the *Christian World Pulpit*, 10th June, 1890, and quoted in Mellone, *Converging Lines of Religious Thought* (London, Lindsey Press), pp. 103–4.

nature, personality is found to embrace the deepest differences within the most intense unity; and therefore the very idea of an Infinite Personality must imply an infinite manifoldness and variety of operation, absolutely unified. If then this manifoldness and variety of operation in relation to the world takes a threefold form, we get a conception of Deity which may be called Trinitarian but is not tripersonal. The Unitarian contention is that while such a formulation of Theism may be philosophically sound, it is not essential. Everything of religious importance in it is secured by insistence on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: in other words, the reality and constancy of immediate divine self-revelation and immediate divine inspiration. One of the great historic failures of Christian theology, I venture to believe, is found here: that theologians, in their eagerness to exalt Christ to the throne of Deity, have been largely blind to the immeasurable value and profound philosophical significance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not contained in the New Testament. It is a product of a distinctly later age. What the New Testament gives are the names which subsequently became the names of the three Persons in the Trinity. But there is no possibility of discovering in any text —though there may be by a judicious combination of texts—the identification of the later doctrine of the Trinity.

Here, then, is a doctrine which in its traditional form is proved, by the history of Christian thought, to be unworkable, and which, when rationalized, is found to be fully compatible with Unitarian Theism, but which has mainly a philosophical or speculative interest. To make such a doctrine

into a test by which men who are at one in the essential things shall be divided and excluded from one another is to sin against the light.

(x) *The Way of Atonement*

These critical digressions, dealing as they do with some of the prominent features of the religious thought of our time, have been unavoidable. But we now return to develop the implications of the religious principle which we affirmed to be " first among the essential things " in historical Christianity.

The sonship of every human soul to God is an eternal fact. Nothing that can come to pass in time can destroy it. But men may and do incur, and may and do inflict on themselves, prolonged and multitudinous miseries through striving to live a life which is not their true life. Being for ever sons of God, they would live as though they were mere creatures of time. The very sense of sonship is almost lost. And on our human world is laid the weariness of an age-long burden of ignorance, suffering, and sin.

The great thing needed for our deliverance is that our divine sonship shall be to us not only a truth to be acknowledged by the mind, but a reality to be experienced and lived. Here is the final issue of the question, " What think ye of Christ? " How does Jesus Christ help men to realize this life of Sonship? This is the vital meaning of the theological question, How does Jesus Christ reconcile God and Man?

It is remarkable that in the earliest centuries of Christian thought there is only the most slender support for theories of the Atonement which became widely current at a later time. The early

Fathers did not regard the sufferings of Christ as a vicarious satisfaction of God's wrath, where he underwent punishment due to us and his obedience is imputed to us. Whenever they use language which seems to convey such notions, they, as it were instinctively, safeguard it by the idea of our union with Christ, where *we share in his obedience and his passion*, and only so far as we make them our own do we actually appropriate the redemption he won for us. And their main thought is that man is reconciled to God by the Atonement, not God to man; the change which it effects is a change in man rather than a change in God.

Many centuries later the familiar outlines of the theory of Vicarious Atonement were drawn, and carved into a rigid scheme by the Reformers. They were deeply convinced that human sin is a violation of an Eternal Law which has its basis in the very being of God and is the expression of God's Justice, which must be satisfied. This is the conviction embodied in the Protestant creeds, and worked out, by means of a series of increasingly mechanical and narrowly legal metaphors, into a doctrine so full of immoral paradoxes that modern theology has been marked by a widespread revolt against every form of it. And yet these paradoxes were suggested and prompted by facts of actual experience.

(1) There is in our moral experience an apparent contradiction between the demands of Justice and the demands of Love. These are fundamentally different moral principles. And some of the most tragic conflicts of moral judgment among men to-day spring from the inability to reconcile them. A conclusive mark of a superficial theory of morality is the attempt to resolve either of these principles into the other—as in the " Utilitarian "

reduction of Justice to "Benevolence." But the ancient dogma carried the conflict of Justice and Love into the very being of God, and imagined Deity as a Trinity of Persons, the second of whom died to save mankind from the wrath of the first.

(2) The dogmas of "original sin" and "human inability" in like manner involve an arbitrary perversion of facts of experience. It is a familiar doctrine to-day that communities of men are not collections of separate units, combining only for the conveniences of civilized life. *Bodily* each man stands by himself—though even by physical inheritance he is vitally connected with generations upon generations who have gone before; but spiritually it is literally true that men are members one of another, that they are penetrated by a common spirit and common life capable of an education that is divine, and capable also of a degradation that passes the power of words to describe. Sin, even if it begins in the independent acts of individual men, may result in a corruption of character which spreads like a disease, and is utterly beyond the power of the individual will to cure. The fact that men thus, *both for good and for evil*, inherit and share in a common life, is the truth distorted and perverted to falsity in the dogma of original sin. And so far as the facts of life compel us to limit the range of human freedom, so far is truth contained in the dogma of human inability.

(3) As a factor in evangelical preaching, the motive of the orthodox theory of evil is to lead through a sense of sin to humility and at last to dependence. Orthodoxy here becomes intelligible, as soon as we perceive that its purpose is practical rather than dogmatic. Religion consists so greatly in the sense of dependence, that it is a

leading purpose in the orthodox system to produce this. This being absent, the uplifting principle is absent; the man cannot rise above himself. There may be truth, courage, conscience, purity, but they are all stoical and self-relying. This practical instinct which the orthodox dogmas regarding sin express is sound and good; but we can satisfy it without appealing to any unnatural miracle or crisis by which Mercy and Grace are made ours. Once recognize that men are always dependent on one another, that all are dependent on God, and that what is good in man is God in man: then in every good deed and faithful effort of the human spirit we may find a ministration of Divine Grace.

(4) This brings us to the heart of our question. All real redemptive work in the world must be the outcome of personal sacrifice and to that extent of suffering. Even in what appears to be complete success, this is still true. In all good work the worker must needs give *something that is part of himself* for his work. And in this respect the life of Jesus of Nazareth is the supreme example of the suffering for others which all true work involves just in proportion to its inwardness, depth, and power. The question which we set out to answer is therefore twofold. Is Jesus *indispensable to the highest religious life?* This is a theoretical question which we do not propose to discuss. We do not know what the *highest religious life* is; and no one is entitled to assert that *his own* personal type is the highest. Is Jesus *valuable and important to the religious life?* This is a practical question which demands an answer and which we answer in the light of the doctrine of Symbolism.

While it is true that the highest ideal of good

is God himself, and that he both can and ought to be the object of our highest love, it is also true that the one sure pathway of experience to lead to the knowledge and love of God is through the Divine Symbolism of human goodness. The consciousness of God cannot be so living and clear as to work strongly on feeling and thought without external influence to arouse it: not the influence of instruction alone, still less that of law or commandment: but the living manifestation of goodness in the personality itself, the visible comprehensible ideal of Godlike manhood, which lays hold of all hearts which are not completely hardened, and awakens in every breast the smouldering spark of the better self. When goodness is set forth not merely as a law that commands but as a living reality and life-giving force, we feel how much it is to be desired, and willing surrender to it is no longer a burden but a joy. It is this that appeals as by a saving hand to the man whose courage has departed from him and who despairs of himself: this, that by the unselfish force of its forgiveness, help, and healing, arouses faith in the Divine Love which conquers all and forgives all: this, that by its example of persistent faithfulness gives courage to the weak and inspires him with confidence to arise and enter on a new life. Of this grand and universal truth Jesus becomes the revealer, not by being an exceptional personage who could be a rule or example for nothing, but *by being a signal instance of it so intense and impressive as to set fire to every veil that would longer hide it.*[1]

[1] See essay on "The Value and Significance of Jesus," p. 219.

(xi) *The Future*

One aspect of the case, however, remains untouched. Unitarian Christianity has its institutional and denominational side. Will it command the future? Will it maintain a living and effective position in the future?

The denominational defects of Unitarianism are many and are confessed—confessed often with a frankness which puzzles those who do not know the movement from the inside. A denomination is not necessarily in a dying or decadent condition because it dares to discuss its difficulties in public. And it does not follow that the religious thought of a denomination is to be tested by the numbers or even by the cohesion of its membership: if that were so, it would seem, by the rules of elementary logic, that the true theology must be that which is distinctive of the Church of Rome. Need it be pointed out that the religious thought of a denomination is scarcely ever the sole cause affecting the cohesion or the extent of its membership?

In the case of the movement known as Unitarian, its past history has stamped certain characteristics on its life. Our fathers were forced into exile by exclusion from the larger historic churches of Christendom; and this, together with our subsequent denominational history, has infused a certain habit of mind. It is the habit of independent judgment, of bringing opinions to the bar of a sturdy common-sense, of proving all things and holding fast that which is good. The men trained in these congregations have learnt to think reverently, but to trust their own reason and stand on their own feet. I mention these qualities not in order to dwell on their value, but to point out that these qualities do not easily

lend themselves to the creation of that consciousness of common life which instinctively demands corporate union in "a Church." But the question of what Church will "command the future" is a question which all of us in our wiser moods will let alone. No one need grudge the Anglican, the Presbyterian, the Congregationalist, the Wesleyan, the Baptist, or any other man, any satisfaction to be derived from believing that one day *his* church will embody the world's universal and eternal faith. Once Martineau himself was speaking of this dream: "Happy and complacent belief! Held, and disappointed, by every sect in turn, with respect to its own creed, yet living and fervent still! Needful, perhaps, to maintain the zeal of successive generations, yet surely maintaining it on an illusion."

The Hebrew prophet, in a grand world-picture, delineates the disappearance of the great conquerors and kings of earth, one by one, into the world of the dead; and as each one descends, the shades of departed potentates greet him with a wondering question: "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?" There is a world of the dead, where the shades of dead creeds, and theologies, and man-made systems dwell. Into that world all our little schemes of thought will go: the latest and newest, at last, will travel there:

> "They are but broken lights of Thee;
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

The consciousness of all this points to the reason why Unitarians, "to a greater extent than larger and less mentally alert bodies of Christians," are "open to the manifold influences of modern science, sociology, and psychology." Their task

is not an easy one; but they believe it is their appointed task. It was defined many years ago by Martineau, with an insight extending far beyond the occasion. Early in the year 1838, he attended a meeting called by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and moved the following resolution: "That this meeting, in professing its attachment to Unitarian Christianity as at once scriptural and rational, and conducive to the true glory of God and well-being of man, and in avowing its veneration for the early British expositors and confessors of this faith, at the same time recognizes the essential worth of that principle of free inquiry to which we are indebted for our own form of Christianity, and of that spirit of deep and vital religion which may exist under various forms of theological sentiment, and which gave to our forefathers their implicit faith in truth, their love of God, and their reliance, for the improvement of mankind, on the influences of the gospel." [1] In this resolution, three main points are emphasized:—

(1) That Unitarian Christianity is scriptural, rational, and conducive to the true glory of God and well-being of man.

(2) That there is something greater than Unitarian Christianity; and that is the spirit of fearless free inquiry, without which Unitarian Christianity could never have come to be.

(3) That there is something greater even than Unitarian Christianity and free inquiry; and that is the spirit of deep and vital religion which may exist under many different forms of doctrinal belief.

Here are defined three essentials of Unitarian

[1] See J. Estlin Carpenter, *James Martineau, Theologian and Teacher*, London, Lindsey Press, p. 222.

Christianity. Doubtless the resolution implied the use of the Bible as a standard in a way no longer possible to us; but fundamentally the principles are the same now as then. Each one of these principles, of course, is capable of perversion. The *first* may become the mere protest of an isolated body, the creed of a sect against other sects, the dogmatism of a minority. The *second* may yield a vague and formless freedom with no content of positive meaning. The *third* may produce a religion which ignores the need of coherent thought to give unity to the emotions and guidance to the will. Sundered thus from each other, even these ideals fail. United, they yield the rising vision of another Church, in whose upbuilding Unitarians believe they have their appointed part, though its life will be too vast and rich to be called by any of the names which now are familiar to our ears; a Church that will not discard the objective help of historic religion, embodied in the supreme personality of Christ, realizing in its highest historic form the relation between God and man; a Church thus wise to gather to herself all the best truth that old times have won, but never seeking to build religion on a dogmatic theological idea, and for ever strong to watch, with forward look, for the light that is still to rise from the unspent deep things of God; a Church whose one demand of all her children is, that they shall be pure in heart, and whose worship is built on one great motive of thought and action, "Glory to God alone!"

IV

THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS

By George Rowland Dodson

The Rev. Professor George R. Dodson was born in 1865 and was educated at the Universities of Missouri, California, and Harvard, where he graduated A.M. and Ph.D. He has held the following appointments: Unitarian Minister, Church of the Unity, St. Louis, Missouri, since 1903; Associate Professor of Philosophy, Washington University, St. Louis; President, Missouri State Social Hygiene Society. His publications include: *Bergson and the Modern Spirit, The Sympathy of Religions*, and articles in various philosophical and theological journals.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD IN THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS

The great ideas of the human race have had a long history, and some of them are still in process of evolution. The continuity of our spiritual life has at last become clear. The thoughts and aspirations of the most highly developed men and women of the present have had a humble ancestry. They have grown out of the cruder conceptions and more primitive emotional life of our remote progenitors.

The purest and noblest religious ideas of Europe and America are like the Mississippi River at New Orleans. Near its origin in a Minnesota lake it is but a few paces wide. As it proceeds, it receives into itself the entire Missouri River and Ohio River systems and other tributaries, and finally it pours into the Gulf of Mexico the drainage of half a continent.

So Christian and Jewish thinkers of to-day have a complex spiritual inheritance. The stream of Israel's thought and life was long ago blended with that of the Greek culture. Later, when the northern peoples went to school to Christianity and the classic civilization, they brought with them traditions and customs, some of which still survive. Before these diverse elements were fully united and harmonized, another factor was introduced, namely, modern science. Under its influence all religious ideas are being transformed, and the process of readjustment has been particularly rapid during the last five or six decades.

It is the purpose of this essay to set forth the evolution of the idea of God in the last hundred years, and especially in the second half of that period, to state some recent achievements of constructive religious thought and to indicate the problems with which the foremost thinkers are now struggling and the difficulties which are at present unresolved.

It is, of course, much easier to describe an era long past than to understand the significance of the present or to forecast the future. It has been said that we live forward, but understand backward. If this were the whole truth of the matter, our situation would be discouraging. It is, however, only a partial statement. The mind looks forward as well as backward. There is such a thing as creative intelligence which has pertinent visions of a better future and is able to devise means for their realization. Indeed, the practical function of the mind is to

> "Understand our own age and the next,
> And make the present ready to fulfill
> Its prophecy, and with the future merge
> Gently and peacefully, as wave with wave."

While the full significance of new principles and conceptions is hidden from us, a partial comprehension of contemporary tendencies is by no means impossible and great events really are taking place in the intellectual world. The new discoveries in physics and their significance for cosmology and philosophy are enough to keep one awake of nights. So, within the last century, a change has come over our world-view and our religious conceptions which is the most revolutionary in history and which separates us from our immediate predecessors by a cleft wider and deeper than that which we call the Reformation.

Indeed, as Professor E. C. Moore has pointed out in his *Modern Thought Since Kant*, "there is a remarkable unity in the history of Protestant thought in the period from the Reformation to the end of the eighteenth century. There is a still more surprising unity of Protestant thought in this period with the thought of the mediæval and ancient Church. The basis and methods are the same. Upon many points the conclusions are identical. There was nothing of which the Protestant scholars were more proud than of their agreement with the Fathers of the Early Church. They did not perceive in how large degree they were at one with Christian thinkers of the Roman Communion as well. Few seemed to have realized how largely Catholic in principle Protestant thought has been. The fundamental principles at the basis of the reasoning have been the same. The notions of revelation and inspiration were identical. The idea of authority was common to both, only the instance in which that authority is lodged was different. The thoughts of God and man, of the world, of creation, of providence and prayer, of the nature and means of salvation, are similar. Newman was right in discovering that from the first he had thought, only and always, in what he called Catholic terms. It was veiled from him that many of those who ardently opposed him thought in those same terms." [1]

It would be hard to find a clearer statement of the thought situation at present than that which Professor Moore has given in the first chapter of this admirable book. The old issues, differences and classifications are shown to be obsolete. The line between the religion of authority and the religion of the spirit runs not between the Catholic

[1] Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

and Protestant churches, but through and across them all.

New principles and conceptions are now accepted by educated men which differentiate the thinkers of the last eight or ten decades from all who lived before. The revolution produced by the scientific and historical treatment of the Old and New Testaments, by the comparative study of non-Christian religions, by scientific discoveries and the evolutionary view of nature, " divides men now living from the contemporaries of Kant in his youthful studies of nature, as those men were not divided from the followers of Aristotle."

All this is clear and indisputable. While Catholics and Reformers have maximised their differences, we now see that what they had in common was vastly greater and more important and that these differences were concerned only with the details of a world-view which is rapidly becoming obsolete. The religious thinking of the West down to the middle of the nineteenth century was within the limits of the venerable Hebrew-Christian-Aristotelian tradition. All intellectual workmen were engaged in reshaping the old thoughts, and almost all rested on the authority of Bible or Church. A fresh, original, independent consideration of the religious problem and an effort to determine the scope and validity of mechanistic and teleological conceptions were yet to come.

Unless this is fully realized, a comprehension of the religious revolution of the last century is impossible. Consider for a moment the abyss which separates us from the men of 1825. Our great telescopes and sensitive photographic plates together have revealed a universe of two or three thousand millions of suns. A century ago Protestant, Catholic and Jew could still read without

astonishment the sixteenth verse of the first chapter of Genesis. It is there stated that on the fourth day of the creative week God made the sun and moon, "*the stars also.*" These three words, "the stars also," give the writer's sense of proportion and that of all men till recently. The creation and stocking of our planet consumed a week. Incidentally, on the fourth day God created the universe.

The vast extension of our concepts of the universe in space has been followed by an equally great revolution in our ideas of time. History has expanded from a period of six thousand years to the ages of biological, geological and sidereal evolution. We now think in terms of millions of years, and find a new meaning in the familiar words, "Unto us the ends of the ages have come."

But it is not merely that we have discovered the unsuspected vastness of the universe in space and time. Our thoughts have indeed been expanded; but they have also been revolutionized. A hundred years ago deistic conceptions were common, and they are still to be met with. God was thought of as outside the creation since the first Sabbath, seeing it go. His relation to it was external. He was the great "First Cause." Once started, the universe went on of itself for the most part, though some believed it to have fallen under the control of the powers of evil. From time to time God manifested himself by special interferences with this evil, or at least godless, order. To maintain belief in these theophanies naturally seemed vitally important. Religion was based on these miracles. Science was, of course, opposed, for it has closed up many of these lacunæ in the natural order. Obviously, if all the gaps were filled, God would be shut out of the universe.

The conception of the immanence of God has now become sufficiently familiar to make this ancient view seem quaint. Theistic thinkers of the present see God in the order and not in exceptions. Miracles, if they occurred, would not be helpful. As interferences with a divine order, they would be a source of perplexity, and are therefore no longer seriously considered.

Furthermore, it is becoming difficult to understand the significance of history for our ancestors in pre-evolutionary days. Evolution first put in a meaning into history. The past is significant, interesting and important for us to understand because out of it by orderly processes have come suns and planets, plants and animals, personalities and civilizations. It is true that the orthodox "scheme of redemption," involving the partial salvation of the human race from an original disaster, was a kind of philosophy of history, but aside from the fact that it was based on a literary misinterpretation of certain passages in the Old Testament, it left the greater part of the world's life out of consideration.

Israel, on this view, was a garden of God in a world of wild growths. Since the days of Amos and Isaiah a truer and more generous conception has indeed not been without representatives, the conception, namely, of the unity of the world's life and of all nations as within the scope of God's providence and care. Still, the prevailing view has been that Israel was in some special sense God's people and that Christianity was the only true religion, all other religions being false. Although not yet extinct, this conception is becoming rarer and its disappearance is merely a question of time. By the middle of the nineteenth century men were learning to distinguish between religion

as such and the rites, ceremonies, forms, doctrines and institutions of the various religions of history. Religion, like science and philosophy, is now seen to be one of the great permanent interests of our race.

As the great religions of the world are studied they are found to be related, to have many similarities and to illustrate in their development the same laws. The Homeric gods were the ideals of Homeric times. They were individual deities with local habitations and proper names. In the fourth century B.C., however, we find Plato declaring, in the second and third books of the *Republic*, that Homer and other poets must be expurgated and that God must be represented only as pure goodness and truth.

Thanks to historical scholars who have arranged the component elements of the Bible in the order of their composition, we can now trace in its outlines the evolution of the moral and religious consciousness of the Hebrew people from early times, when Jahweh was a deity dwelling on a mountain in Arabia and sanctioning the cruelties and superstitions of that rude age, or when he was the God of Palestine with no jurisdiction beyond, to the noble conceptions of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah. This is one more illustration of the truth that the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns and that the gods grow better as the people do. Finally, Jewish religious evolution culminates in the teaching of Jesus, for whom man is the imperfect but beloved child of the Perfect.

The fruit of this long development then becomes the seed of a new growth. Transplanted into the Greek world, the Jewish-Christian ideas could live only so far as they were able to adjust themselves

to their new environment. New conceptions are received into alien minds only by a process of assimilation which is also a process of transformation. Many so-called impurities or adulterations of Christianity are now understood as necessary incidents of that re-interpretation which takes place when the Gospel is carried by one race to another, say by the Jew to the Greek, by the Frenchman to the Hindu, by the Scotch Presbyterian to the Japanese.

Of the development of Christian thought from New Testament times this is not the place to speak. But two things have happened which must be taken into account if we are to understand what o'clock it is in civilization and state clearly the achievements and perplexities of theological thought at the close of the first quarter of the twentieth century. The first of these is the discovery that all the great activities of life, in politics, ethics, æsthetics and religion, pass in their development from an instinctive stage of construction to a reflective stage of reconstruction in which the inheritances of an earlier time are examined, criticized, improved and adapted to new conditions. Evolving life in time grows thoughtful, and when religious life becomes reflective it seeks to understand itself. While many attempts have failed and many theologies have been outgrown and discarded, theology, which is the result of man's effort to understand his life of aspiration and faith, continues to live and produce new constructions. It is as indispensable as it is inevitable. When men declaim against theology, as they sometimes do, they betray a very natural confusion. The traditional interpretations of the religious life are indeed unsatisfactory in various degrees; but because we are compelled to reject various theologies of the past, it does not follow

that we can do without a religious philosophy of our own. Thoughtful men cannot be content to live the religious life unreflectively, and the attempt to understand it is what produces theology and then subjects it to ceaseless revision. It is constantly necessary to "prune away the accretions of time, to counteract the tendency to stereotype or fossilize particular forms of thought, and so to give room for the further growth of the spirit of man." [1] Theological thought thus performs an indispensable service to the religious life.

The second revolutionary change in recent times is that which has taken place in the attitude of the religious thinker. He is no longer provincial in spirit. The effect of a study of the history of religions is a deep sense of the unity of man's aspiring life. The modern scholar no longer feels that he is the representative of a particular sect. When he goes forth to his researches it is as a knight-errant of humanity. What he wins is won for his race. He is a defender, not of one faith among many, but of Faith. He may be, and generally is, a member of some religious fellowship as he must be a member of a nation and a family, but what concerns him supremely is to know if the religious view of life is true. He realizes that the danger to the interests he has at heart lies not in some church or religion, but in the irreligion of an extreme mechanistic-materialistic view of life.

This attitude of the human spirit is an achievement which has been made possible by modern studies of the religions of many peoples and races in different stages of culture. It is not too much to say that we have passed the time of guesses and fanciful theories and that knowledge of the main

[1] E. Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, i. p. 27.

outlines of the evolution of the religious life of the race has come. Religion in its early stages is everywhere substantially the same, whether it be studied in its survivals in the higher religions, in the superstitions of the masses, or in the religions of modern savages. From this primitive view, this "first grasp of the soul after truth," the various polytheisms and monotheisms of the world arose. The great systems which grew up were for centuries more conscious of their differences than of what they had in common. "Homo homini lupus" was especially true of the religious man. Each held the views of his sect or party blindly, literally, and fanatically. Within the last century, however, the lines of evolution which had so long diverged have begun to converge. In all enlightened fellowships there are minds with the insight which enables them to perceive the community of real interest and the identity of the goal of the religious souls of all ages.

An admirably clear and concise statement of this fact has been made by one of the most respected of modern scholars. In his *Introduction to the History of Religions*, published in 1913, Professor C. H. Toy gave the following summary:

"Unity exists among the lowest and among the highest religious systems. Among savages and half-civilized cults there are no important differences—they all have the same ideas respecting the nature and functions of supernatural powers and the ways of approaching them. In the higher cults a process of differentiation goes on for a certain time while each is developing its special characteristics, and then a counter-movement sets in—they all tend to come together by suppressing local features and emphasizing general ideas. Thus, at the present day, there are groups of Buddhists,

Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians and Moslems that, without abandoning their several faiths, find themselves in substantial accord on some essential points. The unity of savages is the unity of undeveloped thought; the later unity rests on discrimination between accessories and fundamentals." [1]

This solid achievement of modern scholarship is one of the most inspiring events of our time. It means that we can not only foresee an end of religious conflict, but that we may actually hope to plot the curve of the religious life of our race, from the unity of its crude beginnings, through numerous differences in the long intermediate period when men were developing their powers and learning to think clearly, to the unity of civilized thought on the heights of life.

So much it has been necessary to say about the religious life before proceeding to discuss its reflective interpretation. The philosophy of religion, which deals with the idea of God, is but the religious life coming to self-consciousness and understanding itself, and it is of interest only to those for whom that life is a reality. Theology could not long survive as a form of Palæontology. Only an archæologist of passion would think it worth while to devote his time and thought to a study of extinct forms of spiritual life. But if the life of faith and aspiration which has been so vigorous in the pre-reflective ages of history is to survive, now that life has grown thoughtful, it is obvious that the great days of theology as constructive religious thought are yet to come.

It is well also in this place explicitly to avow an assumption that underlies the present discussion. This is, that the religious life of the most highly

[1] Toy, *op. cit.*, p. 572.

civilized men will not be destroyed by our efforts to understand it, nor will it be left behind as we make further intellectual advances. There are important and difficult questions before us, but they are living questions. If the religious view of the world is true, no people that ignores it can live successfully and happily. And if the religious life of the present and future depends upon faith in God, it follows that a theology which clarifies and legitimates that faith will more and more be looked to for services of the first importance.

It is clear, then, that there was continuity in religious thought down to Channing's time. The Jewish-Greek-Christian-Scholastic tradition maintained its sway. Thinkers of all churches and parties accepted the same general world-view. It was a question of modification, of emphasis here, of elision there, of difference of stress on various points. But all appealed to authority and all thought within the same general limits. But for the religious thinkers of the present the whole of the traditional scheme is obsolete. It is not even considered. Even Channing's noble ideas were often set forth in connection with his magnificent protest against Calvinism. But if we turn from his pages to any recent exposition of religious thought, we usually find no reference to Calvinism or its rivals, and if this venerable system were mentioned before an ordinary group of young people, they would probably exclaim, "What's that?" Nor is this to be deplored. The stream of humanity's intellectual life, like that of a great river, has a way of shortening and straightening itself. It grows more and more crooked, the bends and curves deepen, until finally there is a "cut-off," the river straightens itself and leaves on one side a semi-circular lake.

It no longer goes a long way round. So, in the theological discussions of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, we are struck by the fact that religious thought no longer goes by way of Augustine or Calvin, but proceeds by a more direct route on its way. The books we read to-day are not written by provincially-minded men seeking to defend traditional doctrines. What we have is rather the effort of men, whose attitude is universal and human, to discover the essentials of the religious view of life and to decide whether or not that view is valid and true.

Within the last century the transition has been made quite definitely from deism to theism. As to the meaning of these terms usage varies. But the tendency is to reserve the former for faith in a transcendent, extra-mundane deity, while the latter name is kept for the conception of a God who is both immanent and transcendent. Many thinkers in accepting the doctrine of the divine immanence have felt it necessary to give up the idea of transcendence. The inevitable result of a purely immanental view of the divine is, as Professor A. Seth Pringle-Pattison has shown, a pantheism which equates God and nature to the extent of holding that God is equally present in everything. "Such a view leaves no room for moral distinctions, or indeed for any distinctions of higher and lower; everything just as it exists is equally divine and therefore equally perfect." Such a view satisfies neither the intellect nor the religious nature. It will not do to "identify the being and life of God with the process of human history or with the last term (so far reached) of any finite attainment." The theism of the present is therefore endeavouring to combine the truth of

deism with that of pantheism. It sees in the immanence of the transcendant, the presence of the infinite in our finite lives, that which alone explains the essential nature of man, the divine discontent which is the root of all progress, the evolution of his desires into the love of the highest values, and his home-sickness for the ideal world.

The storm centre of theological thought lies, however, in another region. Down to a century or two ago men thought they knew what God was, if he existed. The only question was as to his existence. To demonstrate that existence the famous arguments of history were devised—arguments generally supposed to have been refuted by Kant and Darwinism.

To-day no one doubts that there is a world-ground, "an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed." The question of questions concerns, not the existence, but the nature of ultimate reality and its relation to our highest values, to all that is humanly precious. The very essence of religious faith is that reality is akin to, most like unto, and best symbolized by what we supremely reverence and love. When one can sincerely hold this high faith his religious response to the universe is courage, hope and love. For him Goodness, Beauty and Truth are not epiphenomena, mere by-products of a universe whose reality is purely physical. Religion, as Dean Inge concisely puts it, is "the faith that gives substance to Values," and "it is only by the path of Value that we reach God at all." [1]

In regard to this philosophers and theologians generally agree. Further, there are few who would dissent from the statement that the reality of spiritual Values involves the reality of per-

[1] *Outspoken Essays*, 2nd series, p. 28.

sonality. Obviously there are no Values apart from some appreciation of them, and this appreciation is a function of personality. It is generally recognized that Höffding, in his master work, *The Philosophy of Religion*, so rich in learning and insight, is guilty of logical failure when he labours to show that religion is faith in the conservation of Values and yet refuses to draw the necessary conclusion that Values cannot be conserved apart from some form of personal or super-personal life. Nothing sub-personal can appreciate or conserve Values. The unconscious physical forces of nature are indifferent to our ideals. Religion, therefore, is life in the conviction of the reality of free, purposive spirits whose function it is to realize and express truth and beauty, justice and love, and it involves faith in God, "the *Valor Valorum*, the Value of values, the supreme Value." As far as we can see now, the only view which legitimates our aspirations, justifies our religious response to the universe, and supports our sense of kinship with the divine, is the theistic faith that ultimate reality, the power in and behind evolution, is best symbolized, not by unconscious physical force, but by the noblest and highest personality. For it is clearly true, as Herbert Spencer explicitly admitted long ago, that when with advancing years we outgrow our childhood's conception of God, the alternatives before us are not limited to two, namely, personality and something lower. He points out that our choice lies rather between personality and something higher. Of course this higher something can only be symbolized, not described, but the mind and heart rest content in the thought that our highest symbols mean too little, not too much.

Now this purified theistic faith, the outcome

of the long development of Hebrew-Christian and Greek thought, is becoming very difficult for many thoughtful men to-day, for the reason that it is incompatible with that mechanistic view of the world which has grown up in their minds as a result of scientific studies and which they suppose to be a necessary implication of scientific truth. This view is usually only an impression, and not a clearly thought-out and deliberately accepted metaphysical theory. But a deep impression, a philosophy which has unconsciously grown up within us, is more dangerous and more difficult to deal with than a system of thought consciously adopted and held in the face of admitted difficulties. In the latter case the man has the philosophy: in the former the philosophy has him, and it holds him the more despotically and tyranically for the reason that it is unrecognized, uncriticized and unexamined.

The view that the world is an unconscious mechanism, indifferent to Values, is in most cases a philosophy of the second kind. It is easy to understand how naturally it arose and has become widespread. The success of physical science has been marvellous and its prestige is consequently immense. Our whole industrial life rests upon applied physics and chemistry. Now physical science seeks mechanism everywhere and finds it in many places, even in living organisms. It does this for the reason that it is exceedingly useful to conceive of the world as a mechanism. Whatever is mechanical in its nature can, actually or conceivably, be controlled. Science is, therefore, right in applying mechanical concepts whenever it can. These concepts are tools, instruments which have been profitably employed and are indispensable, and it is natural and right that

methods which have proved so fruitful in physics, chemistry and astronomy should be used as far as possible in biology and psychology.

To look for mechanism everywhere is, therefore, entirely legitimate. To leap to the conclusion that there is nothing else but mechanism is quite another thing, logically unjustifiable, not demanded by science, and quite incompatible with that view of human life which we must hold if we are to live at all. This is quite clear to philosophers, theologians and many men of science. But popular thought, always lagging behind, still retains the impression that a mechanistic view of the world is the only view that is compatible with science. A multitude of writers, publicists and other middlemen of enlightenment, and even some ministers of religion, suppose that theism has had its day and that if henceforth we are to have a religion it must be a religion without God.

Eventually they will see, what is now obvious to the leaders of thought, that to accept a mechanistic view of the world, to believe that reality is indifferent to Values, is to make a bad metaphysics out of a good working theory in science. The difficulties in the way of mechanism as a philosophy are insuperable. Consistently held, it leads to the denial of the most obvious of facts and the most certain of truths. For instance, mechanism means that all causes are physical, that freedom is a delusion, that men are conscious automata and that consciousness is an inert spectator of life, as incapable of counting for anything as a man's shadow. This reduces the moral life to illusion. It sees the causes of human action not at all in conscious purposes, ideals, sympathy or love, but in the neuro-muscular machinery. From this conclusion extreme "be-

haviouristic psychology does not shrink." Human Personality, Responsibility, Ideals and Values, all that men really care for, fight for and die for, is regarded as inexplicable, miraculous and ineffective by-products of physical forces. Furthermore, since what makes no difference can be subtracted without making a difference, consciousness can be conceived of as not existing and yet nothing would be changed. All human activities which are now attended by consciousness would go on equally well in its absence, the causes of these activities being in the mechanism of our physical organisms and not in consciousness. All the dramas of life, its tragedies and comedies, would go on unchanged. An unconscious Socrates would drink the hemlock for principle's sake. An unconscious Christ would die on the cross writhing in tortures he did not feel, expressing a love of which he was unconscious. And when he breathed out his last prayer, the movement of his lips, being physical, could have only a physical cause.

To such absurdities, a mechanistic philosophy consistently held, inevitably leads, and from them it cannot possibly escape. It negates the idea of God, to be sure, but it also contradicts our most certain experiences. In his famous essay, *A Free Man's Worship*, Bertrand Russell points out in sincere and vivid phrases the religious consequences of this view. Life is there represented as a mere incident in the cooling of the solar system. Man comes into being miraculously in the midst of unconscious forces, which will eventually destroy him, but upon which he can for a few brief moments from the heights of his superiority look down. There is no meaning in the great drama, and the end is darkness, cold and death. This writer admits that this view is the negation

of all that we call religion and indeed of all values, but argues that it is true and that we must all come to it at last. The cosmic fate of all values he declares, is to perish without trace. But it has been shown that the mechanistic philosophy, which he takes for granted, rests originally on the baseless assumption that because science finds mechanism in so many places, therefore all is mechanism, and that on the strength of this assumption we may deny all reality to human purpose and ideals and values and all efficiency to human consciousness, thus making automata of men and depriving human life of moral significance.

An adequate description of a plant would include an account of the climatic conditions in which it could live. The idea of God is itself a living thing. To understand it we must know something of its history and of the thought-situations favourable or injurious to its continued life and growth. It has been explained that the mechanistic view of the world, at present so widely held, is unfavourable to theism. If this view were universal and held in a thorough-going way, belief in God would doubtless perish, and one of the great ideas of the race, which has been developing through thousands of years, would end in no idea at all. Of this there is little danger, for men will in time come to see, as the philosophers see now, that mechanistic metaphysics is only a temporary position of advancing thought, and that it is both logically and practically untenable. Furthermore, it cannot be harmonized with the greatest and most fruitful concept of our time, namely, that of Evolution.

The evolutionary way of thinking is the supreme achievement in the intellectual history of the race. All fruitful thought is now in terms of growth.

The world is regarded as a vast complex of processes, or orderly changes. Past, present and future are viewed as parts of one organic whole. The doctrine of evolution is itself a product of evolution and indeed is still evolving. But it is in the years since 1859, when Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared, that it has become dominant in the intellectual world and has revolutionized the sciences, philosophy and theology. Before showing how it has influenced the idea of God, it is well to make clear the fact that mechanism and evolutionism, when held in a thorough-going way, are mutually contradictory. A clear, logical mind cannot be a mechanist and an evolutionist at the same time. For it is an axiom of mechanism that all is given. Consequently there can never be anything new. The utmost possible is a series of re-arrangements of the given. One configuration succeeds another according to mechanical laws. If all is mechanism, anything else is inconceivable. If evolution seems to result in anything new, that result is mere seeming and must be explained away. Creation is impossible, for there is nothing which can create. Atoms, molecules, electrons change their relative positions—that is all that is or ever can be. This doctrine, therefore, reduces evolution to an illusion. It can no more admit creative evolution than it can admit the reality of values or the efficiency of ideals.

To a mind which has retained its sanity and is free from sophistication the fact that a thing is is the best evidence of its possibility. It will not deny facts on the strength of a theory. Nor can it permanently endure the strain of self-contradiction. It cannot rest in conscious inconsistency. Further, when civil war breaks out

among the concepts of the mind, Occidental thinkers at least are not content to produce the appearance of unity by declaring some of the discordant factors to be illusion. Facts must be admitted to be facts and then their unity discovered, if possible. Now if we know anything at all about evolution, it is that it is creative. There is continuity in some real sense, no doubt; nevertheless, when a globe with a temperature of several thousand degrees cools down and becomes the abode of life, something new has indisputably emerged. And when life, rising through countless forms in millions of years, becomes rational, worshipful and loving, we have something more than molecular changes.

On the machine view of the world, the evolution of the really new is inconceivable and therefore inadmissible. The most striking characteristics of human life, creative intelligence and conscious purpose, it must ignore or explain away. Since teleology is impossible in a mechanistic universe, it must be as impossible in the human part of it as anywhere else. Man becomes an automaton and human life a puppet show, and extreme behaviourism merely shows the wires by which we are moved. We are nothing more than machines for the capture, storage and release of energy, for the redistribution of matter and motion, in which consciousness counts for nothing. If we should lose it, we would continue to "be born, seem to fall in love, marry and rear children; civilization would rise and fall; there would be the outward forms of courts of justice and of churches filled with unconscious automata going through the motions of singing hymns and expressing aspirations for a better life."[1] So much it

[1] *Bergson and the Modern Spirit*, by G. R. Dodson, p. 101.

seems necessary and appropriate to say here about the most important of those factors in the present thought situation which are unfavourable to the idea of God, for few minds have a talent for logical consequences and many profess acceptance of a mechanistic philosophy without perceiving its inescapable implications.

It remains to point out the way in which the doctrine of evolution has influenced the idea of God. Of our present needs none perhaps is greater or more urgent than that of a true interpretation of the meaning of evolution. Indeed, the idea of evolution is bound to be more and more a factor in human evolution. A failure to understand the laws of the great process will therefore be serious. Many interpreters have offered their services, and if few have achieved much success they have at least enabled us to write "No Thoroughfare" over several roads. They have shown the worthlessness of all compromises and half-way modes of thought. It is only when evolutionism becomes all-inclusive and thorough-going that its religious significance begins to appear. Once convinced of the unity and kinship of all life, from minute specks of protoplasm in early seas to the saints and seers of the human race, the mind strives for some glimpse of the meaning of the great process. Its natural and instinctive attitude is expressed in Browning's lines:

> "This world's no blot for us
> Nor blank; it means intensely and means good;
> To find its meaning is my meat and drink."

To come at once to the main point, while much remains obscure or a matter of personal conjecture, there is an ever wider and clearer appreciation of the fact that the doctrine of evolution has rendered obsolete the idea of a purely physical

nature. And this removes at one stroke the materialism which made faith as difficult for former generations as mechanism has made it for this. We see clearly that our forefathers' difficulties were needless. For they formed a conception of nature, leaving man out, and then used nature so conceived as an explanation of all that is specifically human. But this is not permissible. It is now obvious that the material world is an abstraction when sundered from the conscious lives in which it culminates. This is fundamental. One cannot even begin any profitable thinking on this subject until he sees clearly and comprehends the implications of the fact that *we have no experience of a purely physical or material nature.*

The only nature that we know has produced and sustains civilization; it has blossomed out into millions of personalities striving to conform their lives to an ideal order. Nature, the real concrete nature we know, the only nature we have any right to talk about, is a vast complex process seemingly physical in its lower stages but rising at last to the heights of thought and love. But the higher phases of development are as truly nature as the parts that are crude and immature. The spiritual life is but the natural life in its higher ranges. To regard the physical aspects of the process of nature as real and its spiritual activities as mere by-products or epiphenomena is like saying that a lily is not its flower but that the reality of the plant is its bulb down in the slime. Surely the truth of nature is the whole, the highest it has reached, or shall reach, plus the process of its becoming. And surely, too, any process is to be interpreted by its tendency and outcome. So much Aristotle clearly saw twenty-two centuries ago.

The constructive value of this principle becomes constantly more clear. It is pointed out (to mention only three recent books) in *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, by W. R. Sorley, *Bergson and the Modern Spirit*, by G. R. Dodson, and *The Idea of God*, by A. Seth Pringle-Pattison. The last named emphasizes the fact of man's rootedness in nature, so that "the rational intelligence which characterizes him appears as the culmination of a continuous process of immanent development." There is no break between human intelligence and its antecedent conditions. Human values are nature's values. Man is organic to the world. The world is not complete without him and humanity cannot be treated as an isolated phenomenon, nor are thought and love to be explained away by pointing to the fact that they appear only at certain stages of a process whose earlier stages were apparently purely physical. Applying the twin principles of continuity and immanence and "refusing to characterize the nature of the world till we have all the facts before us," we see the falsity and logically untenable character of that "lower naturalism which seeks to merge man in the infra-human nature from which he draws his origin, which consistently identifies the cause of any fact with its temporal antecedents, and ultimately equates the outcome of a process with its starting-point. A higher naturalism will not hesitate to recognize the emergence of real differences where it sees them without feeling that it is thereby establishing an absolute chasm between one stage of nature's processes and another. What we have to deal with is the continuous manifestation of a single Power, whose full nature cannot be identified with the initial stage of the evolutionary process, but can only

be learned from the course of the process as a whole, and most fully from its final stages."

There does not seem to be any escape from this position. Evolutionary naturalism is favourable to a theistic and teleological view, *when consistently and fully thought-out.* It is not logically permissible to regard the early stages of evolution as fundamental and the later and higher as excrescences or by-products. Humanity is not an isolated phenomenon, a self-contained organism, but a part of nature, and the characteristics of its higher life must (and not merely may) be taken into consideration in forming our conception of the nature of nature. Indeed, if the evolutionary process be assumed to have any real meaning, and if the distinctions of higher and lower on which civilized human life is built have any validity, it is precisely the most highly evolved moral and spiritual values which best express the nature of reality.

The moral, æsthetic and religious consciousness all imply that there are degrees of reality or perfection. They strive towards a deeper truth, a more perfect beauty, a nobler, purer love. We are the children of the perfect and turn to the ideal world as our home-land. A great biologist has explained the actions of some lowly organisms as due to tropisms. The fact is that man is a theotropic animal. When he is at his best he turns with his whole heart to God, in whom his ideals are united. Wide empirical observation confirms the great statement of St. Augustine: "O God, thou has made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee."

We deal here with the idea of God as it is held to-day by the leading theologians and philosophers in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Popular thought lags far behind. Many religious leaders, even, do not yet clearly see that they cannot be evolutionists and at the same time adopt mechanism as a philosophy, since the latter, by insisting that nothing more is possible than a rearrangement of the given, denies the reality of evolution and the emergence of anything new, and by reducing everything to the dead level of mechanical equivalence also denies the spiritual causation of conscious thought and love.

There is also a frequent failure on the part of religious thinkers to see that evolution, clearly thought out, has done away with materialism, since a purely material nature is something of which we have no knowledge. But it is just as true and practically important that evolution, with its production of ever higher values, is incompatible with that lower naturalism or pantheism for which God is as truly present in mud, hair and dirt as in the highest and noblest personalities. Religious thought invariably falls into this immoral pantheism when it gives up the idea of the Perfect progressively realizing itself in evolving human life. Without this latter idea, every fact, good or bad, " is referred directly to the operation of the supreme principle, and that principle becomes simply the pell-mell of empirical experience over again." Such a view obliterates all distinctions of value and approximates certain Oriental cults, " where the immanental unity of the divine is little more than the idea of a teeming nature, and passes easily into a gross polytheism, whose deities represent and consecrate every natural force and tendency." This confusion in religious thought, which is so obvious and which seems so hopeless to casual visitors in the theological field, shows signs of clearing up.

The clarification is in large measure due to those thinkers who constantly insist that it is not defensible to profess acceptance of principles and yet try to evade their consequences.

A timely example of this constructive thinking is the second course of Gifford Lectures by the Earl of Balfour, just published under the title of *Theism and Thought.* In these lectures the distinguished author makes crystal-clear the fact that human life is human because it is ever striving after the three great values—knowledge, love and beauty, and that divine guidance must be postulated if these values are to be maintained. In other words, we live by theistic beliefs, clear or implicit. For see what we come to on the principles of mechanism, materialism and a thorough-going behaviouristic psychology. These rest on the assumption that there is nothing more in anything than in its beginnings, and since intellectual processes rest on vital and these on chemical and physical processes, the true causes of apparently rational and loving life lie in irrational forces. "The materialistic solution," as he points out, "involves the abandonment of any effective belief in ourselves—mind may know matter but cannot move it. Matter produces mind but cannot know it. Mind is the impotent shadow of matter. Always effect and never cause, it reflects, imperfectly enough, a world whose lightest atom it is powerless to direct. Not by a hair's breadth does the universe change its course for all the struggles of deluded men."

On this view all teleological views of nature and its higher development in human nature are illusions. Our beliefs and our passion for values "must in the last resort be counted among the purposeless products of physical conditions, which

have no leanings toward truth and no aversions from error. . . . If snatches of reason and gleams of purpose occasionally emerge in the latest stage of the evolutionary process, this is but an accident among accidents. . . . Everything we believe, we believe because in the order of causation blind matter and undirected energy happened to be distributed in a particular manner countless æons before man made his earliest entry on the cosmic stage. From this senseless stock has sprung, according to naturalism, all that there is, or ever can be, of knowledge, practical or speculative, earthly or divine—including, of course, the naturalistic theory itself. How then can we treat it with respect? Whence come its credentials? . . . By what freak of fortune, by what gambler's chance, has it come about that these irrational influences have blindly but successfully shepherded mankind into the narrow way that leads to truth?"

Conclusions like these mean intellectual bankruptcy, yet it either is to them or to theism that we must eventually come. But what kind of theism? Certainly not deism with its God working *ab extra*, nor pantheism with its obliteration of all distinctions, nor the absolutism of philosophy, but the theism of the religious consciousness and the God of religion, who "favours the good, who in the end overrules evil and between whom and finite spirits there is something that can best be described as a personal relation."

Which is to say, that in the last five decades, and especially near their close, it has become clear that those views of life and the world which have seemed incompatible with the idea of God are themselves tenable only when their real meaning and implications have not been thought out.

This achievement is of greater importance than may at first appear. For while it is well known that faith is not purely a product of reason, it is yet true that no faith can long stand which is inconsistent with reason. Actually, the religious faith of enlightened men rests partly on authority and tradition; an emotional or mystic factor is involved, and there is sometimes also a volitional element. Yet these would be insufficient if the venture of faith had to be condemned as irrational, if faith were not "reason grown courageous," if it were not true, as Professor Royce has said, that "the wise shall live by postulates."

The views of life and nature which have made the idea of God difficult to hold for the men of 1875–1925 will probably be left behind in the next half-century, as they have ceased to be serious obstacles for the clear-sighted even now.

It will become an axiom for the interpreters of the process of evolution that all who would rightly comprehend it must consider its tendency and outcome as well as its beginnings. And actually that process has resulted in the emergence of personality, of a rational being who aspires to dominate his environment and to reshape it in accordance with his ideals, and who strives to guide his life by the values of truth and beauty, justice and love. Life is teleological, the more so the higher it rises. While the crude idea of a God working *ab extra* to realize a design is obsolete, the observed facts of life force us to the view that there is an immanent teleology or purposiveness, "an increasing purpose," as Tennyson said, running through the ages. The trend of evolution in our part of the universe is towards personality or a society of personalities guided by the highest values.

The interpretation of evolution now gaining the assent of thoughtful men has been well stated by Joseph A. Leighton in his *Man and the Cosmos*. "The single thread of continuity or meaning, then, which binds together the successive stages of evolution is the emergence and increasing dominance of personal spirit or mind as the true home of values. Nature is the prelude to culture. Material and vital evolution are the overtures to man's realization of personality, by the organization and development of social cultural life. That the great epic of personality is as yet only imperfectly unfolded constitutes not a ground for pessimism, but for hope." [1] This writer makes clear the fact that "the values of natural evolution are concentrated and summated in persons." Now while, as Sorley points out, the concept of value is abstract, values themselves, as qualities of persons, are concrete. And when we consider that the cosmic process has eventuated in a world of men millions of whom live and die for such values as beauty and duty, truth, justice and love, we are driven to the conclusion that "such values inhere in the constitution of ultimate reality, and this implies that reality, at its highest and most permanent level, is spiritual and personal."

This means that the evolutionary way of thinking, followed out to its ultimate consequences, brings us back to the idea of God which a mechanistic metaphysics threatened to destroy. Put in the simplest way, the situation may be stated as follows :

We do not believe in magic or in results without adequate causes. Now the process of evolution has resulted, in the human world, in a multitude

[1] Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

of personalities whose nature is to be realizers of values, who are seekers after God, who strive to control the natural life and its impulses and powers and direct them in accordance with an ideal order. Of the power or life that has produced them we must say that it cannot be less than its manifestations or products, that is, not less than the finest and highest personality. And since there is no evidence that evolution has reached its term, since the finest men and women are striving to reach heights above them, there is every reason to think of the power in and behind evolution as higher and better than our highest and best. From this conclusion there seems to be no escape. Of course we can only symbolize, not describe, what is beyond our present experience, and our highest words are, as Matthew Arnold said, merely "thrown out at" the great reality we mean. But in choosing our symbols for God it is surely more appropriate to use the highest we have. It is truer and better to think of God as personal or super-personal rather than as some sub-human unconscious or purely physical force. Of nature below man, Mr. Clutton-Brock has truly said that "it is not God, but less God than we are ourselves, more blindly groaning and travailing. It is not a vast, heartless, omnipotent process, imposing itself upon us against our wills, but a number of things with less will than we have, less consciousness, less sense of direction." [1]

On the other hand, as there are depths below us, so there are heights above. Our life, which everywhere strives "to master matter, and to become more fully life through the mastery, could not have a goal of its striving if there were no master life

[1] Clutton-Brock, "Spirit and Matter" in *The Spirit*, pp. 338 and 340.

to inspire it. It is that master life that we mean when we use the word God, and as the most intense life we know, the life in ourselves, is more personal than all other life, so God is more personal because more intense life than we are ourselves. As St. John affirmed that God is love, so must we affirm that God is life; and the word *is* is as much a part of the affirmation as the words *God* and *life*. We are not yet fully life as we are not fully love; but God is fully life as He is fully love. That is what is meant by the words 'God is spirit'; and we know dimly and prophetically what life is, what spirit is, because it exists already and fully in God." Such is *the meaning of evolution when we cease to regard man, nature and God as isolated and separate, and see them to be one whole. There is no mere man, or mere nature, but one vast process of ascending life.* "There is no such thing as nature, but only life everywhere trying to master matter and be more life. We ourselves are part of nature in that our life and our mastery of nature are imperfect; but all nature is more than nature, in so far as there is the divinity of life, of spirit in it." Conceptions such as these are the high-water mark of religious thought. They are held in clearness by but few, but may become a general possession before the century reaches its close. They have validity only for those who have a deep sense of the reality of personality and of the values towards which it strives.

It must be admitted that many difficulties and obscurities remain. Much work yet remains to be done in theology and the philosophy of religion. There is, for instance, the question raised half a century ago by Herbert Spencer himself—In evolution, what is it that evolves? Is becoming only in the realm of the phenomenal or does reality

itself evolve? To what in the ground of things is evolution due? Some thinkers believe that God himself is evolving, that he must be imperfect and in process of development if he really lives. Such a view seems to some present-day thinkers true and satisfying. They feel that "a universe of static perfection might grow stale for God and men alike. Struggles terminating in the attainment of ever higher planes of co-operation, justice, love and beauty may for ever take place in a universe destined never wholly to become, but eternally to progress towards absolute perfection." To many others, however, the hypothesis of an imperfect, evolving God, who does not perhaps know his own mind, is both intellectually and religiously unsatisfactory.

If man's religious response to the universe is to be justified and permanent, if the history of religion is not to be that of a pathetic illusion, some conception of God must be found and sustained in which the religious consciousness can rest—that consciousness which finds expression in such venerable words as, "O Thou who changest not, abide with me," and "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms." Those who feel this way are likely to turn away from William James, L. T. Hobhouse, and Hastings Rashdall to Josiah Royce and those who with him believe in a living Perfection which is the goal of our yearning and striving.

Furthermore, the conception of a finite growing God has intellectual difficulties of its own. For such a God, if He exists, is part of the scheme of things, and, constituted as we are, it is the scheme of things, the whole, that engages our supreme interest. The situation has been well expressed by Sir Henry Jones :—"A God who is not infinite but limited is a God who is neither self-subsistent

nor self-determined. If he acts, it is only under conditions which he has not called for, and he operates upon an environment over which he has not complete control. He owes his being to the causation of a prior and presumably a higher power. Manifestly, therefore, the name God, which is just our name for what we deem to be in itself all in all, must be transferred to that higher power, or to some whole which *is* sustained and self-determined; and these theories succumb to this necessity. There is an absolute above their God, or a companionship of spirits which is greater than himself, of which he is an important member, and nothing more." The same objection applies to another modern substitute for the idea of God, namely, that of a republic of spirits, upheld philosophically by some but resting in other minds on an extreme democratic temper which revolts against all authority, even that of perfect Goodness and Truth. Behind such a fellowship of spirits would be the conditions, ground and cause which would ultimately determine their fate and that of their values, and which it would therefore be our supreme concern to know. If there be finite and limited gods, one or many, they should be treated with due reverence and respect, but that which we inevitably seek and short of which we cannot stop is their source and ground, who is over them as he is over us.

These devices of philosophers and theologians in distress, natural enough as attempts to solve real problems, are not likely to gain wide acceptance. For it is obvious that if the idea of God is to be accepted and influential among educated men, it must meet the demands of both philosophy and religion; that is, it must help man to understand and adjust himself to the world in which he lives

and it must meet the needs of love and worship. It is only careless or shallow minds that can forget what both Platonism and Christianity have taught, namely, that man is essentially a lover. In a few immortal pages of the *Symposium* Plato has described the evolution of human love. Beginning with the physical and personal, it ascends through many stages until it is transmitted into worship of the ideal, perfect and immortal beauty. So the goal of human development, according to Jesus, is to love with all the intensity and power of human nature, and *the only reality which we can love in that way* is the great life in which are united the perfect truth and beauty, righteousness and love.

Philosophy should not rest on authority, but commend itself by its own inherent reasonableness. For this reason as well as for lack of space, this statement of the present position of theistic thought is not here supported by citations that could be made from a number of thinkers whose names inspire respect. However, since this essay is written not for professional philosophers only, but for intelligent men and women who are engaged in "a lifelong struggle against one-sided ideas of life," and who wish to know the net results of human thinking on this high theme, the writer may appropriately quote in confirmation some conclusions of one contemporary philosopher who has well stated what seems to him to be the outcome to date of the intellectual enterprise of the human race.

In *The New Rationalism*, by Professor E. G. Spaulding of Princeton University, it is pointed out that there is much in the universe besides the realities studied by the physical sciences and that ideals of right, justice and truth are actualities

and are present in human life as efficiencies. The author also clearly shows that "ethics is not a phase of biology, even as biology is not mere physics and chemistry, and these are not mere sciences of space and time and number," and, further, that it is impossible to reduce the higher realities to the lower or deduce the former from the latter. The great values for which men struggle and live and die are declared to be real parts of the objective world. There is an evolutionary process in which "just acts, motives, and persons appear and disappear, as do also beautiful things and qualities. But justice and beauty and truth themselves do not change, but remain eternal, quite outside of time and space. There is a realm of values that is not subject to the stresses and strains of this evolving earth and this starry universe."

God, for this thinker, is "the totality of values, both existent and subsistent, and of those agencies and efficiencies with which these values are identical. He is also at once the multiplicity of these entities and the unity of their organization in that they are related. This means that God *is* justice and truth and beauty, both as these are above our world and as they are in it, and that he is thus both transcendent and immanent. . . . In brief, God is Value, the active, living principle of the conservation of values and of their efficiency. . . . For there is a Power for good that works not only side by side with man, but also *in him and through him, flowering in that freedom which is given to his reason to get at truth, to his emotions* to love the beautiful, the good and the true, and detest the ugly, the evil and the false, and to his will and manhood to engage in the struggle." [1]

The existence of evil, physical and moral, has

[1] Spaulding, Ch. xlvi, *passim*.

always been a difficulty for theism. The natural order and the moral order often seem to be in conflict. For those who admit the validity of both and yet believe that we live in a universe, not a multiverse, the difficulty is "to show that the mind which is the home of goodness may also be regarded as the ground of the existing world." There have been many in all the ages of reflection who have felt that the existence of evil forces the frank and logical mind to give up either the goodness or the omnipotence of God. The recent development of our knowledge of the universe has not greatly changed the situation. It is true that biology has discovered an immense number of adaptations which imply an "immanent teleology," but it has brought to light also much dysteleology. There are many elaborate contrivances which enable the lowest organisms to prey on the highest. Every year thousands of human lives are destroyed by microscopic germs which are marvellously adapted for their destructive work.

There are some considerations which to a certain extent lessen the magnitude of the problem. Some things believed by our ancestors to be evils are now seen to be goods or essential conditions of human welfare. Other evils have been overcome and done away and still others are obviously doomed. With the new powers science puts into his hands, man may achieve further successes in this line beyond our most sanguine hopes, and thus go far to justify Emerson's prophecy that we shall "convert the furies into muses and the hells into benefit." These are pleasant and profitable thoughts, but they do not dispose of the problem. For it is the unjust distribution of suffering, as between individuals and as between the past creation groaning and travailing in pain and the

happy people in the good times coming—it is just this that constitutes the problem. And it must not be forgotten that if all moral evil were done away, the division of animals into herbivora and carnivora, with all the suffering it entails, would still remain.

One device to help the mind beyond this distressing antinomy is discredited, and that at least is something. The clear-sighted, sober Western mind will not attempt to rid itself of evil by calling it illusion. Nothing is gained by this procedure, and nothing is changed but the name. Or, rather, the change is for the worse. Fanaticism is added to our previous sorrows, and for the practical attitude of opposition to evil which characterizes the normal, healthy mind there is substituted the disposition to ignore unpleasant realities. Man's business is to attack evil and wage an unceasing war against it, and not merely attempt to explain it away.

But man is also a thinker. He inevitably reflects on the moral situation, and this practical attitude towards evil cannot be indefinitely maintained in the absence of a philosophy through which it will receive legitimation and support. The mind rejects the theory of a devil, a metaphysical principle of evil, and it cannot rest in a dualistic view of the universe according to which the ultimate reality has produced a being higher than itself and by which it stands condemned.

Facing 1925, can we not say this much?—that evil and good are not a parity, though the coupling of their names together in this way may lead us to think so. Good is an expression of reality in a sense which cannot be claimed for evil. We speak of sickness and health; but whereas we can conceive of perfect health, we cannot think

of an organism as 100 per cent. sick. An organism could not be entirely disordered and yet be.

If, as we have reason to believe, evolution is real; if, at the stage we have reached, it is tending toward the development of rational, loving personalities striving together to extend knowledge, create beauty and realize moral ideals; if this interpretation of evolution is correct, or at least the highest and most probable yet reached, it may be that this result cannot be attained except at the cost of those experiences which constitute the problem of evil. To some such view philosophy conducts us. We must hold it, in the face of the admitted difficulties, or, on the other hand, either deny the reality of evil or take refuge in diabolism or dualism. Perhaps there is one other conceivable course, which is to conclude that the universe is not a universe, that it is useless to seek to find in it either justice or value or meaning of any kind. But this would be the end of both philosophy and religion. It would also paralyze the energy and destroy the melioristic efforts of life.

Religious faith and intuition long ago anticipated the conclusions to which reason so slowly comes and which it undogmatically holds. To the man of faith evil is real, but less real and in the end less strong than God, the home of all values. Sorrow and pain persist, but life is rich enough and strong enough to pay all charges. If, as Baron von Hügel says, we have the Christian courage boldly to grasp life's nettle, we are often able to get a glimpse of a profound significance in our experiences, which, viewed externally by the cynical and pessimistic, appear to be merely additional proofs of the irrationality of the world and the meaningless and worthless character of life.

In the last few decades it has become clearer that the ideas of God and immortality are closely related, and to some they seem to stand or fall together. Eminent preachers, such as Alexander Procter and T. T. Munger, have made familiar the thought that if man is dear to the heart of being, he and his values will not perish. It is the nature of love to create and sustain life, and a loving God will not let his children die. So the poet F. L. Hosmer is philosophically and theologically sound when he writes,

> "Life, death and immortality
> Are in my thought of God."

This attitude is as old as Paul, who was persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.

Recent thinkers are insisting that the converse of this relation is also true, that the idea of a God we can worship depends upon faith in immortality. They point out that as we cannot give up God and keep immortality, so we cannot give up immortality and hold to a God as good as the good men and women we know. We may be relentlessly snuffed out by a cosmos which grinds out fatalities. But, if that takes place, "God," as Bishop F. J. McConnell insists, "ceases to be God. . . . A God shut up to dealing with persons on a mere earthly plane would be indeed a limited God."

This thought has been forcibly presented by Professor H. B. Alexander. After pointing out that man cannot achieve his highest with a view of himself as the helpless factotum of vain and

foolish destinies and of his ideal life as a dream, a wraith, a chimæra of reasonless chaos, he shows that the man of the future must believe in nature, in a world alive and inspired by reason and in his own life as having a significant place in the purpose of this world-intelligence. That is, he must believe in God, and a God who does not allow his offspring to perish. "A God for whom this earthly life is a mere spectacle leading to naught beyond, a God whose interest in creation is no better than the appetite of a Roman populace for gladiatorial shows—such a God deserves neither the labour nor the loyalty of the human soul. There must be, in the order of Nature, not only an ethical salvation in this world, but a consummation of the life here begun in a world to come, in order to satisfy reason. Wherefore, the man and the race of the future must have faith in a life in the world to come, belief in immortality." [1]

There are those who agree with this writer, that only the races that believe these two things will have the courage, faith and hope to maintain themselves in this world, since this faith is part of the equipment of the fittest to survive.

"These two great Credos of human history, common to all expressions of the religious instincts —belief in God and belief in immortality—are, I affirm, bound to prevail on the earth. All the teachings of history and biology, every principle of evolution, enforce this view. Races that deny these beliefs must disappear from the earth, in favour of the better adapted members of their kind. . . . Further, I think I may safely add that all natural science and natural law, the order and meaning which man finds in Nature, all that makes a Cosmos rather than a Chaos of the universe, is

[1] *Nature and Human Nature*, p. 45.

maniacal illusion unless Nature keep faith with the intelligence which she has generated." [1]

This is the way it seems to us now. Higher than this our thought has not reached. The idea of God, which has been developing through so many ages, is still in process of evolution. It is held to-day, as in the generations past, in the face of difficulties, and it grows with our growth. But it continues to be indispensable, as the quickener of energy, the creator of hope and the sustainer of that spirit which makes men equal to their tasks, triumphant over their difficulties, and stronger than anything that can happen to them.

[1] *Nature and Human Nature*, pp. 45, 46.

V

THE OLD TESTAMENT

By Robert Travers Herford

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THE OLD TESTAMENT

The century, completed by the anniversary which the present volume helps to celebrate, has witnessed changes of far-reaching importance in every department of thought and life. If it were intended to notice them all, not a volume only but a whole library would be needed for the task. To single out for special notice the changes which have come over the Bible during those hundred years is to turn the attention of the reader to a subject of profound significance in the religious life and thought of this country and of mankind in general. Whether it be the most important subject it would be idle to inquire. For all thinking people in this country the Bible holds a position now very different from that which it held a hundred years ago. However the Bible be interpreted, it is intimately associated with the religion of the inhabitants of this country; and no considerable change in their attitude towards it could or did come about without serious disturbance, and grave apprehension of loss or injury to something unspeakably precious. The position held to-day in regard to the Bible has accordingly been reached only after a long and severe struggle between the defenders of the old and the champions of the new.

It is the purpose of this Essay to study the change which has come about in the position of the Old Testament, as distinct from the New Testament. Thus to divide the treatment of the subject is justified on other grounds than that of mere convenience. It recognizes that the methods

which brought about the change were applied sooner and more freely to the Old Testament than they were to the New. Some important factors made their influence felt powerfully in regard to the Old Testament, and hardly at all to the New. And while at the beginning of the period with which we are concerned both Old and New Testaments together made up one body of revealed truth, one complete statement of the Word of God divinely inspired not merely as a whole but in every part, at the end of the century the Old Testament is clearly recognized as of a different type when compared with the New, the connection between them is not that which it had formerly seemed to be; and while the importance of the Old Testament was then deemed to depend mainly on its function of preparing the way for the New Testament, it is seen now to be important for its own sake, without any reference to the New.

While, therefore, the process of change which affected the Old Testament covered a good deal of the same ground as that which affected the New, there is sufficient difference to allow of separate treatment. The main principles involved were the same in both cases; but the subject-matter was different and the results attained were of unequal importance. With those that were reached by the study of the New Testament the present Essay is not concerned. Its object is to show what is the nature of the change which has come over the Old Testament in regard to the place it holds in the estimation of those who read it, to explain how and why that change has come about, and to make clear the permanent worth of the Old Testament as a great document of religion.

I

English Protestants, a century ago, accepted the Old Testament along with the New as together the Word of God, allowing no question to be raised in regard to the truth of any statement contained in it. Whether literally dictated by the Holy Ghost or written under his guidance and control, it contained the record complete and exact of the revelation which God had made in the times of its origin and by the men whom he had chosen. The Bible was distinguished from every other book by having God himself for its Author, and both Testaments shared equally in that distinction. The appeal to Scripture was the appeal to God. Whatever could be found in the sacred pages was an authentic utterance of God, or a clear declaration of his will. Hence any text could be combined with any other text which might seem to fit it in order to establish a doctrine, to confute an error, to justify a practice, to teach a lesson. Between one statement contained in the Bible and another there could be no real contradiction since both were from God. If there seemed to be contradiction, that was only because the true meaning of the passages in question was not rightly understood. It was the right and the duty of scholars and divines to ascertain with all possible accuracy what Scripture really said, but, when once that had been ascertained, there could be no further dispute. God's word was henceforth certainly known. Nothing was left to the believer but to receive it meekly and learn what it might have to teach. Controversy no doubt there was in abundance as to the interpretation of Scripture. Every sect of Protestants, large and small, justified its separate existence by its own reading of some

portion of Scripture. But they could not have done that unless for each of them the Scripture had been the Word of God. All appealed to the one supreme authority, the record of revelation deemed to be true in every line.

There were doubtless variations in the manner and extent to which the belief in the infallibility of Scripture was carried. The doctrine itself was very old, and had formed part of the Jewish equipment of the early Christian Church. In the Roman Catholic theology the seat of authority was defined to be the Church speaking through its earthly Head. The Bible, though not the final revelation, was nevertheless the Word of God, and the Church alone was competent to declare the true interpretation of what was written therein. There might seldom be occasion to lay stress upon the inerrancy of Scripture; that was sufficiently guaranteed by the general doctrine that the Bible was the Word of God. When Protestantism denied the authority of the Church and set up instead the authority of the Bible, it was inevitable that more stress should be laid upon the detailed inerrancy of Scripture. For Protestants the Bible was the statement in words of the only revelation which God has ever given. There was no other authority to which appeal could be made.

It is accordingly in Protestant theology that the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture was stated in its extremest form. The whole Bible was treated as a consistent unity, in such a way that what was stated in one place could be used to elucidate what was said in another, though there might seem to be no connection between them. The Christian reader might find more profitable instruction in an Epistle of Paul than in Leviticus;

but the one no less than the other was what God had revealed and caused to be written. Paul and John shared with Ecclesiastes and the Chronicler the glory of setting forth the divine Word. The classic statement of this theory of Scripture is to be found in the Westminster Confession, a statement drawn up in the great days of Puritan ascendancy in this country. By the time that the period at present under review begins, the doctrine which had been wrought in the heat and glow of fervent zeal and fierce controversy had hardened into a rigid system; and the assertion of the inspiration of Scripture had been pushed to the furthest extreme of literal application. This was most evident where there was least learning, since it was easy for ignorance to defend a doctrine which only needed a blind acceptance, and no other weapon than a clamour of "atheist" and "unbeliever" against any who would challenge it. And even the learned, who were better able to judge the weakness of the extreme assertion, seldom if ever questioned the substantial validity of the main position.

At the beginning of the hundred years now completed, the reaction from the French Revolution was still strong, and the main defence against the assault of radical infidelity was the Bible, the one source and depositary of revelation, not only God's Word but his very words, his promise of salvation, his threats to sinners, his rebuke to all who would be "wise beyond what is written." To utter a word against the Bible was to lay impious hands on the Ark of the Covenant. It is probable that in no other time and country has the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, its literal inspiration in every word, been so strongly held as it was in this country a hundred years ago.

And by none was it more stubbornly held than by the clergy of the Established Church, who were in the nature of things the most conservative in their theology, the most immovable in their adherence to traditional orthodoxy.

Even for those who really studied the Bible, this view of its meaning and nature made such study almost fruitless; or, if that is too much to say, such study was strictly limited in its range, and to a large extent unreal in its results. For the Bible was necessarily taken, so to speak, at its face value. Whatever was stated there was true. Moses wrote the Pentateuch. David wrote all the Psalms. Solomon wrote the Proverbs, and the other books ascribed to him. Every prophet wrote the book which bears his name. An obscurity in Genesis might be cleared up by a text from Isaiah; the Book of Ecclesiastes might be helpfully illustrated by reference to the account of Solomon in Kings. Proof texts to support a given doctrine might be gleaned from any part of the Bible which could furnish them, the Old Testament and the New being for this purpose taken together. Out of Scripture thus regarded it was possible to extract a consistent body of doctrine, a theological system, which could be plausibly offered as the teaching of the Bible. And when it was said that "the Bible and the Bible only was the religion of Protestants," that was said of the Bible regarded in the manner here described. The whole of what in the religion of Protestants was held to be necessary to salvation was in the Bible, and nowhere else. It could be read there and drawn out thence by just inference, and the conclusions so reached were sound because the major premiss was that every sentence of the Bible was God's own truth.

That the study of the Bible so regarded might be fruitful for edification and the fostering of personal piety is, of course, not to be denied. And if it be said, as in our time it would be said, that such study left men blind to the human interest of the Bible, the answer would be that the Bible was not to be read for its merely human interest; it was not a book to be read like other books, it was God's own book, and if he had thought fit to impart certain information about the lives of the patriarchs, or the kings, or the prophets, it was to be supposed that he did so only for the sake of the revelation as a whole, the eternal truths which were the real subject of the Bible. David as an extremely interesting and many-sided personality was one thing; David as " the man after God's own heart " was another, and the Psalmist cast his robe over the murderer of Uriah. Joshua must have done rightly to butcher the Canaanite kings, because God had commanded him to do so. And even God himself had thought fit to send a lying spirit into a certain prophet in order to lure a king to destruction. Common morality might condemn these and other things recorded in Scripture; but it was the sufficient answer that these things were recorded in Scripture, and God had recorded them. " Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? "

Such a theory of the Bible was in the nature of the case certain to come into conflict with forces at work in other parts of the field of knowledge. For there thought moved and " knowledge grew from more to more." The Bible remained a congealed block in the middle, unable of itself to yield to any influence from without, or to make any effort of adjustment from within. The claim made on its behalf that it was a final and complete

body of truth did, in a sense, put it out of competition with other bodies of truth, less complete, not final, and acquired only through the ordinary methods of the trained intellect. And for a time the Bible, or rather the defenders of its literal inspiration, could resist or ignore any comparison between the statements of Scripture and those of merely unrevealed truth, on the ground that the Bible was true whatever might be put forward as true elsewhere. But that position could not be permanently maintained, unless it had been possible to prevent the free exercise of thought and inquiry over the whole extent of the field of knowledge. Even the Roman Catholic Church had been unable to do that, and amongst Protestants it was out of the question. Since the Revival of Learning and the Reformation, the mind of Protestant Europe had found freedom and used it in many fields of study. Philosophy and physical science went on ways of their own regardless of any theological disapproval, and arrived at results for which ecclesiastical sanction was neither expected nor asked for.

The defenders of the Bible, regarded as the infallible Word of God, would presumably have paid no attention to the results of such external studies if they could have been left alone. But they could not prevent attention being drawn by scholars and men of science outside the sacred enclosure to discrepancies between the words of Scripture and the result of other methods of discovering truth. The Bible could not be kept shut up away from such comparison; it was there for every one to read, and it was the duty of every Christian to read it. Theologians might defend their own interpretation of it as the only true one; but they could not prevent those who were not

theologians from also reading it and drawing their own conclusions.

Sooner or later, therefore, the time was bound to come when the defenders of the infallible Bible would be challenged to make good their assertions if they could, and to satisfy not merely the members of their own Churches, but thoughtful men generally, of the validity of the claim they made on behalf of Scripture.

The entrenched fortress of extreme orthodoxy in regard to the Bible was taken by siege from without, and only surrendered at last when further defence was impossible. So at least it was in England, where the position of the infallibility of the Bible and its literal inspiration was most stubbornly held. The process of breaking down that position began, however, not in England but in Germany. Under the influence of Lessing and Herder the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, began to be studied from a new point of view, by men who were not in bondage to the extreme theory of its verbal inspiration. They applied to the Hebrew Scriptures the same methods which were already freely applied to the literature of Greece and Rome, the methods of inquiry into the age, authorship and mutual relation of the several component parts of a given book or collection of books. This is what was called the Higher Criticism, as distinguished from the Lower Criticism, which only concerns itself with ascertaining the correct text of a book. The name "Higher Criticism" was first used by Eichhorn in 1787, and was a harmless name for a perfectly legitimate branch of study. But the terror excited by the name in the realms of conservative theology can be remembered by persons yet living; indeed, it is probably not wholly dispelled even now.

Eichhorn and his pupil De Wette were the two foremost pioneers in the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament, and while they applied their methods to the Hebrew Scriptures generally, the main problem soon disclosed itself as that presented by the composition of the Pentateuch. The Mosaic authorship of the five books ascribed to him had never been questioned except by a very few cautious scholars; and their hints had not been followed up so as to create a body of opinion.

Eichhorn and De Wette were the first who began the study of the Hebrew Scriptures as Hebrew literature, on the lines long since become familiar, of asking what the several books have to say for themselves as to the time and manner of their composition. They did so as scholars well acquainted with the Hebrew language, an indispensable equipment, as everyone would think now but as not everyone thought then. Eichhorn and De Wette clearly marked out the beginning of the path which has been followed by the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament down to the present day. They themselves advanced but a little way along that path; yet even that little marked a decisive step, taken never again to be retraced. They were followed by two of the greatest and most famous Hebraists of their own time or since, Gesenius and Ewald. These two provided scholars with the means of a more thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language than had ever been attainable till then; and all Hebraists have built on their foundation ever since, though much has been done to the superstructure of which they knew nothing.

Whatever may have been the case with Gesenius, Ewald was far more than a philologist and

grammarian. He read the Old Testament not merely as literature but as religious literature, the written record in which was disclosed the history of a people with a genius for religion, and the history of a revelation gradually made to that people. He read that literature with profound insight and sympathy, as well as with unequalled technical scholarship; and while the picture which he drew of the history of the people of Israel has not been accepted by succeeding scholars, yet he was the first who gave a real picture at all, having the features of breadth, distance and, above all, perspective. He did a great work for the right understanding of the Hebrew literature, and his influence was felt far and wide amongst scholars, mainly, of course, in Germany: but even in England his name was not unknown. It is with England that we are specially concerned in this Essay; and these few words about the Higher Criticism in Germany have been written for the purpose of showing that at the beginning of the century under present review there was already established and in progress a scientific study of the Old Testament as the literature of a religion. There was, therefore, a centre of active influence which sooner or later must have an effect upon English theology, so far as the Old Testament was concerned.

The influence of the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament was increased, indirectly but strongly, on the historical side, by the work of Niebuhr upon the history of Rome, and especially his treatment of the earliest period. If the stories of the kings of Rome were but the prose renderings of ancient legends and traditions, unhistorical as they stood, the question lay ready to hand, "What of the stories of the patriarchs in Genesis?" Would

not the historical method when applied to Palestine show results similar to those obtained when applied to Rome? Thomas Arnold was not a Hebraist, but he was the friend of Niebuhr; and not only in his own *History of Rome* but in his Essay on *The Interpretation of Scripture* he dealt with his subject on the lines of Niebuhr. To Arnold must be assigned a considerable share in the work of opening the way for the modern conception of the Old Testament.

In the early years of the century the number of scholars who read German was not great, and the number of theologians able to do so was extremely small. Among those few were Marsh, Bishop of Llandaff and afterwards of Peterborough, Thirlwall, afterwards Bishop of St. Davids, and notably Pusey. The two former were chiefly concerned with the New Testament, but Pusey was a Hebraist, and all three knew the work of the German scholars at first hand. No immediate result followed from the efforts of the three English writers, and Pusey took sudden fright at having advocated liberalism in theology, with the result that he abandoned his position and went over to that of the Tractarians, for whom liberalism was the enemy. Nevertheless, enough had been done by these abortive efforts to make known in England the fact that there was a school of thought in Germany which advocated and practised a method of study of the Old Testament in sharpest conflict with the prevailing views as to the inerrancy of Scripture.

The battle, when it came, would have to be fought out in full view of the nation by men of name and authority, and the time had not yet come. But there were scholars unknown to fame who yet in their own circles took note of the

changes of thought, and prepared both themselves and their pupils for the new developments. The Unitarians were always friends of learning and numbered many fine scholars amongst them. They were accustomed to freedom of thought and inquiry, and were not encumbered by the dogmatic restrictions imposed on the other Nonconformist bodies. They shared to a considerable extent the prevailing view as to the inerrancy of Scripture; they were at least in a better position than most of their fellow-Christians to have an open mind and to keep it open. They were not afraid to know what was going on in other parts of the field of theology. It is worth noting that at Manchester New College in 1847 the work of Eichhorn and De Wette was studied in the class of Hebrew language and literature, as part of the regular course. Whether this was a new feature in the syllabus of the lectures in 1847 does not appear; but there is no indication that the study of the Higher Criticism was a daring novelty. It would be interesting to know the number of the theological colleges at that time which made a point of introducing their students to German theology of so advanced a type.

The Higher Criticism was not the only danger which threatened the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture as commonly held in England. The study of geology afforded material for a wholly new argument, full of danger for that doctrine. The facts accumulated in the study of geology even in its very early days were enough to raise questions as to the accuracy of the statements in Genesis. The creation of the world in six days and the subsequent drowning of that same world by the Deluge could not be honestly reconciled with the theories of the geologists. Theologians

might satisfy themselves that they could refute the argument from geology, but they could not satisfy permanently the ordinary man who was not a theologian. The publication of Lyell's *Principles of Geology* in 1830–3 brought the controversy into full view, as Lyell was a man who could not be ignored or despised; and, although his theory was not instantly accepted, he gradually gathered to his side all the weight of scientific opinion of his time. The leaders of science were not concerned with the question whether Moses wrote the Book of Genesis; they took the line that certain facts were well established within their own knowledge and that certain conclusions followed from those facts. That the Book of Genesis contained statements in direct conflict with those facts only showed that there was something about the Book of Genesis which could not be disposed of merely by calling it the inspired Word of God.

The argument from geology was only part of the larger argument put forward from the side of science, that the statements in Genesis, however they came to be there and however they might be explained, were irreconcilable with the results of scientific discovery and the theories based on those results. Astronomy, and later on biology, joined with geology in exposing the defects and errors of the writer of Genesis, regarded from the point of view of science.

The first half of the century was taken up with the gradual increase in strength of the forces which threatened the commonly received view of the inerrancy of Scripture. An open rupture was certain to come sooner or later; but for a long time there were no certain indications of it which would be evident to the man in the street. Yet

there must have been in those years a good deal of quiet thinking amongst the laity, who occasionally read more than their clerical guides would have approved if they had known. Arnold lamented the stagnation of his time in regard to theological thought, though he himself had been one of the influences which had helped to break up that stagnation. His pupil Stanley had some share in that process, though by no means the greatest. Stanley had learned from Ewald, and he put a good deal of what he learned into his well-known book on the Jewish Church. The Higher Criticism found its way into many an English mind through the charm of Stanley's style, and it was robbed of its terrors by the grace with which he avoided awkward questions. Stanley was the close friend of Jowett, and it was Jowett more than any one else who precipitated the controversy which had so long been threatening. Jowett was not the originator of the scheme which took shape in the famous volume of *Essays and Reviews* (1860), but he was the one of the seven contributors who has left the greatest name behind him.

The purpose of the book was to show that the rapidly increasing divergence between theology and secular knowledge must be dealt with by a change of attitude and method in regard to those subjects which were not rightly reserved for theological treatment. The historical critical study of literature, whether contained in the Bible or elsewhere, must be recognized as legitimate, and the danger to religion clearly shown of insisting on the application of theological standards to literary and scientific questions. Seven members of the Church of England, of whom six were clergymen, set out to do this in a volume of

contributed essays, and Jowett, one of the seven, explained its object as being "to say what we think freely within the limits of the Church of England. . . . We are determined not to submit to this abominable system of terrorism, which prevents the statement of the plainest facts, and makes true theology or theological education impossible." It is perhaps significant that Stanley, to whom these words were written, was not one of the seven contributors.

The publication of *Essays and Reviews* set the country in an uproar. The book was denounced by Bishops in their Charges and condemned in Convocation. It was the subject of sermons and pamphlets innumerable; and, what was much more important, charges of heresy were brought against two of the contributors and tried, first in the Court of Arches and later on appeal before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

The Old Testament was not the object of primary interest to the writers of the book, but the decision of the Privy Council was of vital importance to the whole future development of Old Testament study, as of much else beside. For the decision of the Privy Council gave legal sanction to full and free inquiry into the origin and literary history of the Old and New Testaments alike. It was henceforth out of the power of the defenders of the old view of Scripture to stem the advance of critical study by denunciations of heresy and the weapons of the law. The highest legal authority had thrown them over, and left them with no other resource against the Higher Criticism than to meet it on its own ground with its own weapons—if they could. Old Testament study was not slow to make use of the freedom which it now enjoyed in common with every

other subject where theology had resisted the advance of secular knowledge. And the study of the Old Testament received an additional stimulus through the publication in 1862 of the first part of Bishop Colenso's work on the Pentateuch. This appeared indeed before the decision of the Privy Council in the case of *Essays and Reviews* had been given; and the immediate effect of Colenso's book was to increase the fury of the storm that was raging through the country. Colenso himself was made the subject of legal proceedings on the part of the Bishop of Capetown; and the same Privy Council which dealt with the assailants of *Essays and Reviews* disposed in the following year of the pretensions of the Bishop of Capetown. This is not the place to do more than touch upon the effect of these two great legal declarations. Henceforward the course was clear for the fullest and freest study of the Old Testament, and the Higher Criticism had none to stop it except those who could fairly meet its arguments.

The battle had been fought within the domain of the Church of England by members of that Church. The Unitarians were not amongst the champions whose names became household words in England. Nevertheless the Unitarians were keenly interested in the great debate, and they had this advantage over most of the combatants, that they had been long familiar with the questions at issue. When Colenso's book came out, *The Inquirer* remarked that its readers were accustomed to having such views put before them, and were therefore in no danger of being unsettled. It would be more true to say that the danger in their case was less serious than in the case of the more conservative churches. For even among Unitarians there was a considerable disturbance when

the results of the new theology (as we might call it), and especially of the Higher Criticism, began to be known amongst the rank and file, and were no longer confined mainly to College lectures and learned periodicals.

The famous sermon by the Rev. William Binns before the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire in 1864 had a significance far beyond the immediate occasion. Many who heard it were displeased with the rude assault which the preacher made upon the old theology as a whole and the scant respect which he showed to long-cherished beliefs. But whatever the defects of the sermon, it did show plainly that the time was come when a radical change must be made in the attitude of thoughtful Christians towards the concepts of the older theology. Such a change was demanded by reverence for truth and intellectual honesty, whatever the consequences might be. The preacher's bold words were resented, not without some excuse; but the word had been said which could not be unsaid. And, so far as the Unitarians were concerned, they took their modest place in the progressive movement in theology which has gone on without pause ever since.

It is difficult to keep the attention fixed to the subject of the Old Testament, with which alone this Essay is properly concerned, because that was only one factor in the much wider revolution that was gradually going forward. An important factor, but not the most important; for behind the Old Testament was the New, and if danger threatened the Pentateuch, a much graver danger threatened the Gospels. And behind both loomed a great question only dimly seen in the heat of the controversy, the question, What henceforth would be left of the authority formerly recognized as

attaching to the Bible? That question will be discussed presently; for the moment it will be sufficient to note the course taken by the study of the Old Testament after all legal restriction of that study had been removed. Of the main lines of that study the Higher Criticism has been already referred to and its principle described. The same method has been followed ever since, with results upon which, apart from details, there is very considerable agreement amongst scholars. The main component documents of the Pentateuch have been distinguished and set in their right relation to each other of age and authorship; while at the same time, and as the complement of that study, the history which forms the background of the whole of the Old Testament has been traced in its natural sequence, so far as the main lines are concerned. A great deal remains to be done in the investigation of details and the solution of particular problems; but that the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament has established a large and consistent body of truth in its own department is not now open to serious question.

The scientific argument, founded at first mainly on geology, was greatly strengthened from the side of biology. Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in 1859, just before *Essays and Reviews;* and the controversy aroused by the work of Darwin was to a large extent due to the effect of his teaching upon the Scriptural account of the creation of the world and the origin of the human race. The doctrine of Evolution gathered up into itself the whole impetus of scientific thought in every department, and the study of the Old Testament could not fail to be profoundly influenced in consequence.

Yet another factor came in to modify the previous conception of the Old Testament. The

science of Comparative Religion threw a wholly new light upon the meaning and significance of the Old Testament. The Higher Criticism, aided by physical science, would have been able without other alliance to determine the composition and to adjust the discrepancies of the Old Testament considered as a self-contained body of literature. The inerrancy of Scripture as a doctrine was damaged beyond all hope of repair; yet it would have been possible to make out some sort of a case for the unique character of the Old Testament, and thus preserve something of its ancient authority. But this side of the position was found to be vulnerable when Comparative Religion began to treat the Old Testament as one amongst many literary embodiments of religion to be found amongst the great nations of the world. The literatures of Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt were found to contain striking elements of likeness as well as difference, when placed beside the literature of Israel. And much more than that, the religious experience of Israel was studied no longer as a solitary and unique example of revelation, but as one phase of a world-wide phenomenon. Every people, great and small, had some religious experience, had its teachers and claimed for them some knowledge of divine things. Comparative Religion erased the lines which divided the Holy Land from the rest of the world, and treated Israel as being only one out of all the " kindreds, tongues and nations " who together made up the human race. It was henceforth vain to distinguish between the one true religion and the many false; and even to speak of " the heathen in his blindness " was only possible with cautious qualification.

The history of the study of the Old Testament, since the time when full liberty of inquiry was won,

has been the history of continued advance along all the lines indicated above. Into the details of that history it is not needful to enter, nor does space allow; the mere list of names of those who have done brilliant service in this field of study is a long one, and in the years to come other names will doubtless be added to the list. The Old Testament is now, and has been for half a century, the object of close study from every point of view which promises to disclose any fresh aspect of its contents, any new light upon its meaning. The old controversy in which the study began, which gathered round the question of its inerrancy, has been left behind by all who are able to appreciate the work which has been done upon it by four generations of scholars. The splendid remnant of the literature of Israel which now makes up the Old Testament has been enabled once more to show its beauty and its grandeur, no longer distorted and maltreated by well-meaning but ignorant piety. Disenterred from under the dust and cleared from the spurious accretions which had gathered over it, the Old Testament like some ancient temple stands now before the gaze of the beholder as one of the wonders of the world, one of the greatest monuments of human thought that have survived from the past.

II

In the preceding part of this Essay an attempt has been made to indicate the nature of the change which has been effected during the last hundred years in the way in which the Old Testament has been regarded, and to notice some of the chief agencies which brought about that change. As the result of that change, the Old Testament occupies a

position in men's judgment of it widely different from the position it held a century ago. And although it is true that the study of the Old Testament is still going on and will continue to do so for an indefinite time to come, yet the results of the study of it are so far assured that the modern conception of the Old Testament can be treated as itself an object of study.

In the older Protestant theologies the conception of the Old Testament was that of a body of revealed truth preparatory to the Christian revelation, and forming together with the New Testament the one only authentic record of the Word of God. It had thus a well-defined place in the thought of a Christian, as the primary guarantee of the faith which he professed. The question naturally arises, and indeed presses for an answer, What is the relation of the modern conception of the Old Testament to the religion of a Christian? Or has it any relation at all?

Of these questions, the second may well seem to be more justified than the first. For the process by which the modern conception of the Old Testament has been reached has destroyed a great deal of what was formerly considered to be essential to its sacred character. Not merely is it now impossible to regard its statements as being all necessarily true because found in inspired pages, it is frankly accepted as the work of men, a literature not different in kind from any other literature so far as its origin is concerned, whatever the difference may be in the intrinsic worth of its contents. To regard it as purely human is to pass a judgment capable of more than one application. If it be purely human, the work of men who were subject to the same limitations while possessing powers similar to those of other men, the conclusion may

be drawn that human nature is indeed capable of sublime achievement since it has produced the Old Testament. But the conclusion may also be that since the literature of Israel is only like any other literature, Greek, Roman, Egyptian or what not, it is in no way entitled to claim a special pre-eminence. Why should it be of any great importance except as providing material for the study of human nature? Why should the Christian take any particular interest in it, more than in the literature which contains the works of Homer and Plato? Why should he be more interested in Isaiah than in Sophocles, or read the Book of Job to the neglect of Lucretius?

Questions such as these are amongst those which have been suggested by the development of the modern conception of the Old Testament; and it can hardly be denied that they have sometimes been answered in such a way as to indicate that the Old Testament no longer possesses any special claim to recognition or veneration. Whether this is the right answer to be given to such questions will be considered presently. The point of immediate concern is to estimate the effect of the modern conception of the Old Testament upon religious thought. And one effect, of the kind just indicated, may be described as the tendency to secularize the Old Testament. Another effect tending in the same direction has been the decline and disappearance of the authority of the Old Testament as it was formerly conceived. That it possesses an even greater and certainly more spiritual authority is doubtless true, as will be shown in the concluding section of this Essay; but it is easier to recognize that the old authority is gone, and even to rejoice in that discovery, than to discern the new authority that takes its place.

The old authority gave its sanction to everything in the Old Testament against which the reason and conscience of honest men protested. It was the chief weapon against the critic, the chief mark for the jest of the scoffer and the infidel. But also the authority of the Old Testament (or the Bible as a whole) was the chief guarantee for the Christian of the validity of his religion. If the authority of Scripture were to go, what would be left?

It was this thought which gave to the controversy over the Old Testament its intensity; for those who opposed the Higher Criticism and the men of science were, as they believed, fighting for their lives, or for their eternal welfare. To them it was not merely a dispute about the authorship of the Pentateuch, whether Moses wrote it all or whether Ezra had a considerable share in it, whether there were one Isaiah or two, or three, whether the Book of Daniel was a prophecy of the Exile or a pamphlet aimed at Antiochus Epiphanes. The six days' creation, Noah's Flood, Joshua's command to the sun and moon in Beth-horon might have been surrendered to science, if all these questions could have been argued on the ground of natural intelligence. But behind them was the much more formidable question of the authority of the Scripture which recorded and vouched for them all. If that went, what foundation for religion would be left? What protection would there be against universal unbelief, the reduction of religion to spiritual chaos? It has taken a long time to allay that fear, if indeed it can be said that by now it has been allayed. The curious outbreak of what is called "Fundamentalism" in America shows how great even now is the fear of losing hold of religion produced by the advance of science and criticism. How far Fundamentalism has found or will find

adherents in this country remains to be seen; its presence at all is evidence of the difficulty with which the modern conception of the Bible makes its way to popular acceptance.

The question of the authority of Scripture lies behind the whole controversy which has had for its subject the interpretation of the Bible. And while its effect in one direction has been to delay the acceptance of modern views and modern methods, it has had an effect in another direction upon those who have frankly acknowledged that the old authority of Scripture has gone. This second effect is much more evident in the case of the Old Testament than in the case of the New. Those who have frankly given up the older conception of the authority of the Old Testament are in a position to argue that there is no longer any reason for reading the Old Testament at all, unless for some reason one happened to be interested in it. For the Christian, at all events, it would seem that nothing of any especial value is left if the Old Testament is ignored. He finds what he needs in the New Testament, so far as he needs any documentary support for his Christianity, and of the Old Testament he often knows hardly anything.

Some indication of this attitude of mind is afforded by the change that has come over the practice of pulpit reading in recent years. Half a century ago it was the rarest exception to hear a "lesson" from any book other than the Bible. The occasional use of such extra-biblical readings is one sign of the abandonment of the old idea of Scriptural authority. Practical expression is given in this way to the theory that the Bible is not the only Holy Scripture, and that all the great literatures have their sages and seers no less truly inspired than those of Israel. Many will cordially

agree with that view who yet feel not the least necessity to give that particular expression to it. And they observe that the effect of doing so is to reduce the significance of the Old Testament almost to zero, when the selection made from it for the pulpit seldom includes more than some chapters of Isaiah and a few Psalms. If it were the case that those who so restrict their selection of lessons from the Old Testament have but a very slight and vague idea of what else it contains, that would show how the result for them of the incoming of the modern conception of the Bible has been to deprive the Old Testament of practically all its value. If on the other hand, they were well acquainted with its contents, the same evidence would show that they had lost almost all sense of any reality in the Old Testament since it was a literature based on ideas no longer valid, beliefs no longer held expressed in statements no longer true, the record of a history of far-off ages, of a strange people in a distant land, and not even in its original language. In either case the result is, and is seen to be, a neglect of the Old Testament, sometimes unconscious, sometimes deliberate, and not neutralized by occasional expressions of respect.

It is perhaps needless to dwell further upon this part of the subject. That some such effects have followed or have tended to follow from the change over to the modern conception of the Old Testament, is hardly open to question. Such a reaction was perhaps to be expected after the battle against the supreme authority of Scripture as the infallible Word of God had been fought and won. Such conclusions were well-nigh certain to be drawn, and carried out in these practical ways. But it by no means follows that those conclusions were the only valid ones, or that the right way of justifying the

Higher Criticism was to pay no further attention to what it had brought to light. It will be the object of the remainder of this Essay to draw a very different conclusion and to suggest a very different attitude towards the Old Testament.

III

By those who accept without reserve or qualification the principle and the main results, apart from details, of the modern study of the Old Testament, literary, critical and every other, what place should be assigned to it in religious thought, what should be the attitude of the Christian toward it? The question would be comparatively easy to answer, if it were possible to assume with any confidence that the ordinary Christian knows what is in the Old Testament beyond a few more or less familiar passages. The only way of overcoming that preliminary difficulty is that he should read it and see. And he would immediately retort with the question, Why should he read it? The answers to that question will bring out the several points which need to be made in the case for the real and enduring worth of the Old Testament as a great document of religion.

In the *first* place the Old Testament is valuable for its purely human interest. It is one of the most assured results of modern critical study that the literature of Israel is the work of men with only human resources and mental capacity, and the history which that literature illustrates is a history subject to the same conditions as those which influence the history of other peoples. At once the reader is set free from the artificial restraint of the old conception of the Old Testament according to

which its statements had to be taken in some non-natural sense, its leading figures regarded as types, its events as symbolic foreshadowings waiting for some Christian fulfilment, even its errors and moral defects made presentable by reference to the divine author who had caused them to be written down. All that is gone for ever, and in its place is left a record of the life and thought, the doings and sayings of real persons, of every variety of character. Saints and sinners, wise men and fools, heroes, cowards and all between are to be found there; prophets, poets, statesmen and kings, the shepherd with his flock, the potter with his wheel, the rich and the poor, the peasant and the artisan, the freshness of youth and the cynicism of the worn out man of the world—the list is endless of the different types of character to be found in the pages of the Old Testament. Almost every quality of the human mind finds its illustration there, even wit and humour, though these are not frequent or conspicuous in the Hebrew original and are almost lost in translation. Virtue and vice are represented in abundance, and there is no necessity to palliate the vice or unduly to exalt the virtue because they are recorded in Scripture. They are there on their own merits, if the term may be allowed, to be estimated by such moral standard as the thoughtful reader deems most fit to be applied.

It is all a great picture of human life as it was lived in a certain country by a certain people during many centuries of time, recorded with rare fidelity and complete honesty. Though the record is only fragmentary, its history is mingled with legend, its fact with fiction, its flashes of deep insight with trivial fantasy or grovelling superstition. The Old Testament was written, or at

least its various component parts were produced, by hundreds of men, mostly unknown by name. through a range of many centuries; and while they, like any other authors of a national literature, mingled truth and error in their work, knowledge and ignorance, fact and fable, nevertheless they wrote what to them was part of the reality of life as they knew it. Everywhere in the Old Testament there is a real contact with real people, even though the matter recorded be historically untrue.

The reader of Shakespeare is not troubled by the thought that in the historical plays the author takes liberties with history, or that nine-tenths of the *dramatis personæ* are purely imaginary. From the point of view of the study of human nature the Old Testament need fear no comparison with Shakespeare, in any respect in which comparison is possible. Leaving out for the moment the religious atmosphere of the Old Testament, the reader who goes to it for what may be called merely secular interest will find a rich store of material for the study of human nature; and he can pursue that study without needing to do more than read his English Bible, and without the preliminary labour of assimilating all the results of the Higher Criticism. The old stories of the patriarchs will never lose their charm, whatever may be the verdict on the patriarchs at the bar of history. The critics have left but little of Moses as a historical figure, yet there is a marvellous deal of human nature in what is told about him. The unprejudiced reader will find in the Book of Jonah much beside the whale, and will realize the extent to which trivial association and misguided piety have combined to spoil the reading of one of the finest things in the Old Testament. Who reads the Book of Nehemiah? and who that has read it has

laid it down without some fellow-feeling for the man who tells so frankly of his difficulties, his hopes, his plans, and of his own success in carrying them out?

There is indeed no end to the recital of all the treasures of the Old Testament regarded from the literary point of view, and apart from whatever value it may have as a document of religion. It could be read with enjoyment by an agnostic, and probably has been. As indeed why not? To appreciate and enjoy any great literature does not make it necessary for the reader to share the ideas and beliefs which find utterance in that literature, still less to belong to the same race. It is not needful to labour the point further. The Old Testament, as it is now brought out on to the great field of the world's literature, has a claim along with the greatest of its compeers to be read and enjoyed, and to be owned as one of the most notable productions of the human mind.

In the *second* place, the Old Testament is the record of the progressive religious development of a people who possessed a genius for religion. Though it be true that no people on earth is wholly without religion, yet Israel is unique amongst them all in the richness of its religious experience and the extent of its development.

At the beginning of its history Israel stood on the same level as any of the peoples round about, worshipping a tribal God with barbaric rites and unspiritual ideas. Israel alone of the nations rose to the height of pure ethical monotheism, and the Old Testament is the record of that ascent. On the one side it is the record of Israel's upward progress, on the other side it is the record of a divine revelation, made not once and for all but becoming fuller and more sublime from age to

age. No other literature in existence can show such an unfolding of religion in the life and thought of a people, such an advance from the depth to the height. It is this which gives unity and coherence to the Old Testament, so that its several books and the numberless fragments of books embedded in them, though they proceeded from men of widely different character through a period of a thousand years at least, have yet a certain spiritual kinship, and a common foundation in certain religious ideas. The gradual unfolding of the divine revelation and the gradual advance to a lofty and pure religion is the real unifying principle of the Old Testament; and while that principle is nowhere set forth as a whole, perhaps was never grasped as a whole by even the greatest of the prophets, yet that is what is seen when every component of the Old Testament has contributed its share. That underlies them all. One or another aspect of it finds expression in every book, even in those which seem to have least connection with religion. The religion of Israel is shown as it was felt in experience, as it inspired thought and action; it is not described as a history or analyzed as a theory. The Old Testament contains no philosophy of religion, no ethical treatise, no creed and no system of theology. Yet it is full of religion from one end to the other; the men who wrote it wrote out of a varied experience of religion, and they wrote of persons and events variously influenced by religion. Even the Book of Esther, which never mentions God once, would not be in the Old Testament unless it had some relation to the fundamental ideas of religion as beheld in the Judaism of its time.

It is, of course, the Jewish religion which underlies the Old Testament. The progressive

revelation which was made to Israel was received in Jewish minds, and described in Jewish terms. It found expression in an elaborate ritual and a complex system of law, neither of which is attractive or readily intelligible to the non-Jewish reader. But these are only the form of expression found for the religion; and while they are confined for the most part to a few books of the Old Testament, the religion of which they were the partial expression pervades the whole literature. The keynote of the Old Testament is not ritual and law, but devotion to the service of God, an ever-deepening sense of his power, his righteousness, his mercy, his kindness, his holiness. The Old Testament does not in so many words call God the Father in heaven, but it shows how Israel learned the way to that highest conception of the divine nature. The way was through experience, not through theological speculation. The Old Testament shows how men came to realize the love of God, his nearness, and the likeness of their own nature to his so that they could become like him in holiness and goodness. The personal relation of man to God finds in the Psalms such full and rich expression as can be seen in no other devotional literature in the world; and what is uttered in the Psalms, in words which go home to every heart wherever the Psalms are read and loved, is all of one essence with the religion whose development forms the story of the Old Testament. That story relates the attainment of the height of pure spiritual religion, or, to vary the figure, it discloses the fundamentals of all spiritual religion, the same under every variety of name and creed.

Christianity is not the same as Judaism, is indeed very different; but Christianity rests on

the same ultimate foundation in the nature of man and his relation to God, and in the Old Testament can be read the story of how that foundation was discovered. Christianity built on that foundation a marvellous structure of its own; but it had nothing to alter in the foundation. It is more true than most Christians realize that a great deal of the teaching of Jesus, and especially his ethical teaching, is purely Jewish, as indeed is not wonderful; but that is only to say that for him, as for the greatest of his predecessors who had found utterance for the essence of religion, it was the essence of religion and not its outward forms of expression as specifically Jewish which was of chief concern. When he gave in answer to a question the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength and mind," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," he spoke as a Jew to Jews. If those great words have been regarded ever since as the watchwords of Christianity, at all events of the religion of Jesus, that was not because they were original to him, for they were not, but because they expressed for him the essence of pure religion as they had done for ages past when uttered by Jewish lips and felt in Jewish hearts. What those words mean, what power they have had and ever will have, as the soul's answer to the inward appeal of God and the outward appeal of humanity, was first brought to the knowledge of men, first made part of their experience, by the revelation of which the Old Testament is the record.

Here, therefore, is seen the reason why the study of the Old Testament is of supreme importance for the Christian also and not for the Jew alone. Here is seen the real relation of the Old

Testament to the New. Not in the least as a mere preparation to be superseded when Christ had come, as it were the scaffolding to be thrown away when the new building was finished, but the record of the greatest achievement ever made by the human race or any part of it on the field of religion, the attainment of a great position never afterwards to be lost, and never to be abandoned whatever might be added to it. All that the Old Testament stands for, not merely in the height to which religion was brought by its prophets, yes and its Scribes and Pharisees, all who helped in their day to make it sublime, but also in the gradual unfolding of all this in the heart and consciousness of the Jewish people, all this is a possession for ever; and Christians disown their heritage and dishonour their ancestry when they treat the Old Testament as a thing that has had its day and may now be lightly put on one side. What had the ancient conception of the Old Testament to put in comparison with the new conception? What poor apparatus of types and antitypes, symbols, prophetic predictions of Christ and his Church, can be set against that solemn march of history through the centuries, as the divine revelation unfolded into ever greater splendour, and made its power felt with ever greater authority in the hearts of men?

The Old Testament, the victim of theologians, exposed to every device of unnatural interpretation, never came to its own until it was set free by the critics and scholars and allowed to speak for itself as one of the great literatures of the world. The authority which was once assigned to it as the authentic Word of God was not its true authority and was rightly stripped away from it, like some fantastic robe cast about it by ignorant

veneration. Who could respect such authority, when made to sanction unworthy ideas and the morality of a barbarous age? All that is gone, and in place of it is seen the authority of a great witness to the reality of the deepest experience of human minds, the witness of unnumbered men through a long range of centuries who in their day "trusted in God and were not ashamed." An authority not of some outward tribunal or written code, which can be invoked to crush down the protest of the enlightened reason or the sensitive conscience, but an authority which speaks within both reason and conscience, and is felt there as the authority of God. It is he whose revelation was made to Israel, and it is he whose revelation is made to those also who read the record of what Israel felt and thought and believed and hoped and trusted in the olden times.

All this is no mere fragment of antiquity, though it be very old. To read the Old Testament, even its most ancient pages, is to come upon the experience of the human soul as we know it also, and David was not the only one to whom it is said, "Thou art the man." The words of the prophets, the stories that abound in the Old Testament, its words of wisdom, and above all the undying beauty of the Psalms, find an echo in our experience and a welcome in our hearts, because they touch the same deep springs of our nature that were in the men who first uttered the words. We too hope and trust and believe, we too have our need of the help of God, and our ideal of faithfully serving him in his world where he allows us to live. What if this timeless revelation of God in our hearts is mediated to us through the forms of an older religion and the speech—translated into our own—of an

ancient people? All that is but the outward setting, the earthen vessel which holds the treasure. And, unless it can be shown that religion for the Christian of the twentieth century can be cut loose from its historical connection, can be held secure without the witness of the recorded experience of the past, the study of the Old Testament cannot be neglected with impunity. To give it but scanty recognition in the pulpit, on the plea that other literatures also contain their inspired books, is to abandon a great and splendid inheritance for the sake of a theory perfectly valid and not in any need of such a sacrifice. To read only such passages from the pulpit, and they are necessarily few, which happen to accord with the preacher's own opinions, is to miss the whole point of the reason why the reading of the Old Testament is of so great value in a religious service. The witness of the Old Testament is the witness of a body of human experience far deeper, fuller and more varied than that of any one man, and it gains its power from the fact that it does not merely reflect the preacher's own opinions, such as they are. It may well be, and doubtless it often has been, that a passage from the Old Testament will carry a message to some heart which the words of the preacher fail to touch.

And as with the pulpit so with the Colleges where the future minister is trained for his work. If the primary concern of the minister is with religion, and not with economics or education or social service, then he cannot without serious loss neglect the study of the Old Testament, even such study as is possible without the knowledge of the language in which it is written. Yet it can be said, and has been said, in our own time, that the Christian minister has no need to study the

Old Testament and can get along quite well without it. Even for his own especial work he does need it; and if he neglects it, his work will suffer in ways that he will be the last to know.

But apart from this application of the thought of the permanent value of the Old Testament as a document of religion, there is another aspect of the same great thought which deserves consideration. The Old Testament, it is true, is a document of which the last pages were written before Christianity appeared. As a record it is wholly pre-Christian. The Christian literature succeeded it after an interval of uncertain length, and it is not wonderful that in Christian estimation his own literature had the field all to itself. The Old Testament, if not superseded by the New, was only of use as prophetically foretelling and confirming the Christian dispensation. The modern study of the Old Testament has made that view no longer tenable. The Judaism which in its long history created the Old Testament, and wrote therein its own autobiography, did not cease to exist when it had written the last page of its own Scriptures, or when it beheld the rise of the new religion. It did not yield up its place and preeminence to the new religion; it grew and developed on its own lines, and the vital principle which caused that growth was the same which had been active throughout all the long history of Israel. In the course of that growth and development, Judaism created new forms for its ideas, but in essence it was what it always had been. The Judaism of the Talmud, of the Middle Ages, of the present time mark the true line of descent from the Judaism of the Old Testament, a descent continuous and unbroken, and never at any point sharply turned aside.

Now the Christian religion, though it began in a Jewish atmosphere and on Jewish soil, was in no sense the successor or superseder of Judaism. All that can be truly said is that so far as Judaism was recorded in the Old Testament, that particular record was finished before Christianity arose; and the adherents of the new religion only cared to make a theological use of the ancient Scriptures which they took over. Nevertheless Christianity is in no true sense the development, or completion or fulfilment or lineal successor of Judaism. It was not, even in the person of its founder, a reversion to prophetic Judaism. It was a movement in a wholly new direction, having no affinity with Judaism except at its point of origin. While Judaism followed its own main line of development, the line it had followed from Moses to the Prophets, from the Prophets to the Scribes, the line it continued to follow from Hillel to Akiba, from Saadiah to Maimonides, from Moses Mendelssohn to the present day, Christianity diverged within a few years of its first appearance, upon a line which took it away from Judaism, "far hence unto the Gentiles."

With the spread of Christianity in the Gentile world this Essay has no concern. What is of present importance is to reflect that the Old Testament, as a document of religion, has a significance which is not truly comprehended when restricted to the pre-Christian centuries in the course of which it was written. The great achievement of modern critical study of the Old Testament has been to establish the fact of a progressive revelation, recorded in its pages. That Christianity is the outcome of a new revelation is doubtless true; but that is not to say that the old revelation was thenceforth useless, still

less that the source of revelation, in communion with the living God, was from the time of Christ and the Apostles dried up for Israel. The Hebrew Scriptures have never ceased to be the means by which Judaism has kept open for itself the way to God; and none have known better than the faithful sons of Israel that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

To say of any Scripture that it is a document of religion may mean much or little, according to the nature of the object to which the term is applied. Its meaning, when applied to the Old Testament, is that we have in its long and varied record the disclosure of the fundamental realities of spiritual religion, a revelation indeed of what is as true and vital for us as for ancient Israel, a witness to things eternally true in the life of man with God. Coming down from a far past and a distant land, it speaks, though in Jewish phrase moulded by Jewish thought, the language of humanity; and great is the loss and great the ignorance of those who turn deaf ears to its solemn message or say it is nought. It is no word of God as if he had written or dictated it; but as what men have written who knew him with a fullness of experience given to no other nation to possess, and who wrote out of that knowledge and experience, it is in a new sense a word of God, even *the* word of God, though not to the exclusion of others that in the same sense he has given to man, "having . . . spoken by divers portions and in diverse manners."

The Old Testament stands alone amongst all the literatures of the world, while claiming kinship with every one of them, in the fullness and richness with which it gives expression to the religious nature of man and the spiritual experience of which

that nature is capable. As a literature it belongs to an ancient time and a small nation. As a document of religion it belongs to all time and has its teaching for all nations. In form it follows the lines and obeys the conditions of Hebrew and Jewish thought; it shares the limitations of ignorance and error natural to the times of its many authors. It contains abundant traces of the slow growth from a low to a high conception of religion. Nothing is easier than to show the defects of the Old Testament when judged by modern standards of knowledge and belief. Nothing also is more idle and beside the mark. When all is said and done, it remains as the greatest and noblest achievement of the human mind in the recording of its religious experience, and " whoso is wise will give heed to these things," will not be deterred by the unfamiliar phrase of its speech, the uncongenial forms of its thought, the mere surface details of ritual, law, manners and customs and the like, from owning with grateful reverence in the pages of the Old Testament, the word of the Lord which came to ancient Israel and which came through Israel to all mankind.

VI

THE HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS

By Clayton Raymond Bowen

The Rev. Professor Clayton R. Bowen was born in 1877, and was educated at Franklin College, Ohio, graduating A.B. (1898), and proceeding to study in the Universities of Harvard, Marburg, and Berlin. Subsequently he received from Meadville Theological School the Degrees of B.D. and Th.D. Since 1903 he has held the office of Professor of New Testament Interpretation in Meadville Theological School. His publications include: *The Gospel of Jesus; The Resurrection in the New Testament;* and numerous reviews and articles in theological journals.

THE HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS

THE last century has seen the germination and growth, the flowering and fruition, of the great science of historical criticism. Nowhere has this science won more signal victories than in the study of the phenomena in which Christianity had its rise. The actual fact behind the artless sources has emerged ever more clearly to our eyes, not less imposing, not less significant, than when clothed in the supernatural tradition.

To realize more definitely what was happening has not lessened the wonder of that happening. But it has given us a new avenue of approach, a new cause for wonder. It has, indeed, especially in these more recent years, altered fundamentally our whole attitude to the materials of our research. If we face the question of how and why we concern ourselves with these problems at all, the changed situation may be clearly realized. Whatever may have been true of former generations, for us the phenomena of primitive Christianity are no longer philosophical phenomena, occurring in conformity to a scheme of logical development; they are no longer dogmatic phenomena, intended to serve as the support of doctrines of theology or even capable of so serving; no longer literary phenomena, the writing and editing and collecting of documents; no longer, even, simple historical phenomena, mere data in the chronicle of the first century. As all these, singly or in combination,

has the primitive tradition been treated, and so treated in vain. Not thus has it yielded up its real secret.

Now we are approaching the origins of Christianity as a group of phenomena in the human experience of religion, and we are being rewarded by the clearer vision of their exalted significance. Even the New Testament writings are not ultimately documentary phenomena; they are religious phenomena. Men wrote as they were moved by a holy spirit, not by a *furor scribendi*. It is a very simple thing thus to describe the *rationale* of our inquiry, but it is a very profound and far-reaching observation that we have thus made. The realization of this truth means the greatest transformation in attitude towards the materials of the Christian tradition that the Christian mind has ever undergone.

A survey of the various departments of research within our field, and of the various problems that call for solution in each, would give us impressive confirmation of the position stated. In this Essay we are primarily concerned with the study of the actual historic career of Jesus, the study especially of the controlling purpose of his life. That career we approach as a phenomenon in the history of religion. All other aspects of it are subordinate to this, indeed are unintelligible save in the light of this. The great fact itself and the various legendary accretions that gathered round the fact serve this interest and this alone. Something happened there in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago that cleft human history sheer in two. It was that a young man had an extraordinary experience of religion; nothing save this. His words and his behaviour were but the outward flowering of his religion. His life was obscure

enough and without notable incident; it left its unparalleled impression not at all because of what he did, but because of what he was. Of incident in Jesus' career there is practically nothing in the records save those benevolences to which a later age attached the name and dogmatic conception of miracles. But even such of these as seem clearly historic incident and not legendary embellishment had no such uniqueness and interpretation as later dogmatic necessity put upon them. It was not, in any large sense, a notable *career;* it was, in every case, a notable *experience of religion.* It was as a religious man that Jesus worked what we call miracles. Not as the Messiah, not as Son of Man or Son of God, not by virtue of any unique status, did he go about doing good, healing alike the bodies and souls of the people. Healing and helping the poor was no part of the Messiah's task. Jesus' compassionate heart, his deep sense of brotherhood, drove him to meet the piteous need, and his profound faith in the power and the love of God made him able to serve as the efficient mediator of that power and love to suffering men and women.

There can be no historic question that Jesus was endowed with notable powers, expecially powers of calming disordered minds and restoring diseased organisations to health. It is precisely modern science, with its researches into pathological psychology and its revival of the ancient practice of psycho-therapy, which has made us believe that the stories of healing by Jesus and the apostles rest on a solid foundation of fact. Coloured and enlarged here and there in the process of oral tradition, the list of cases has inevitably been; yet in the main the things happened. The sick were cured, the demoniacs were relieved of

their possession, not always permanently in either case, perhaps, but often or commonly so. If Jesus were not a successful spiritual healer of this type, the Gospels could hardly make any claim to historicity, and many a modern therapeutist would leave him far behind. As to the four nature-miracles recorded, they are either legend or the outgrowth of simpler happenings. As legend, we can see and appreciate their homiletic point; in a story like that of the fig tree blasted by Jesus' curse we can see a parable turned by repeated and vigorous homiletic use into a narrative of outward fact. We are far to-day from that rationalizing treatment of the miracles which, as Matthew Arnold well said, got rid of all the poetry without removing the difficulty. We do wish to give them rational treatment, but reason tells us that when Jesus "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" it was truly because "God was with him"; it was a phenomenon of religion. And when these narratives became a part of the synoptists' record, it was for their religious significance; they were *gospel* for these writers, texts for preaching, not "miracles," not "proofs" of anything. The "evidential" use of these narratives, foreign to their origin and fatal to their religious effectiveness, is fortunately passing away. As A. B. Bruce said as far back as 1892, "Men do not now believe in Christ because of his miracles: they rather believe in the miracles because they have first believed in Christ." Jesus himself, long ago, when he vehemently repudiated the kind of sign the Fourth Evangelist presents with such zeal, evaluated correctly the worth of conviction based on evidential miracle. "It is an evil and adulterous generation that seeks after a sign, and no sign shall

be given unto it." William Temple asks (*Mens Creatrix*, pp. 311–13), "What could be further from discipleship than one who was convinced that Christ is the revelation of God, while wishing all the time that he were not?" The powers of Jesus evidence a great, ardent, vital, kindling, religious personality, who moved and spoke with an authority which even his enemies had to acknowledge, to which minds normal and abnormal were submissive. This is the great outstanding phenomenon, which demands our recognition, and our reverent study. But the issue is only beclouded by trying to save any meaning for the term "miracle" which can be valid for the twentieth-century mind.

But the ultimate question about the human career of Jesus is not: Was he a worker of miracle? It is rather this: Was he the Christ? The title Christ, which multitudes in all ages since his own have applied to him as if it were his personal name, at once opens up a vast field of inquiry. It is an eschatological term pure and simple: it assigns him a specific place in a well-known programme of cosmic events; it identifies him absolutely with a particular theory of history, of Jewish origin. Does he belong there? Is he properly an eschatological figure? These are our fundamental questions when we would evaluate him.

Let us hasten to note that the alleged connection of Jesus with eschatology is in no sense a depreciation of his worth. He could scarcely have attained vital significance in the world's religious life had he remained wholly a stranger to the eschatological sphere. For in truth religion seems seldom able to dispense with a cosmogony. Most of its organized forms have been in some degree

pre-occupied with the origin of the world-order within which men live, and with its dissolution. Among ancient religions, nowhere was this interest more marked than in the religion out of which our own sprang, Judaism, and nowhere does Christianity more clearly reveal its origin than in the persistence with which it clings to this concern. From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of God is preached, somewhere, in some form, in Christianity; the vision of a better world to be nourishes always a divine discontent with the things that are. It is no mere accident that our Christian Bible begins with a description of the creation of the old world, and closes with a glowing picture of the world that is to come. We could not strike this element out of our religion if we would. Whatever be true of other religions, that is no true Christianity which concerns itself alone with the life of the day and the individual, and does not take within its scope the whole of the universe and of history, the entire drama of the destiny of man. The world of the Christian is the world as the subject of redemption. It is not the world of the geographer or of the geologist; it is a creation that groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for some transcendent consummation. The sudden liberal we sometimes meet, who thinks to have a religion of to-day, with no memory of a yesterday and no vision of a to-morrow, is a salutary lesson to us in that his going is commonly as sudden as his coming. When and how did our world come into being, when and how is it to be replaced by that better world of our hearts' desire—these are questions with which religion may not only legitimately concern itself, but which it cannot ignore and live. For better or for worse, eschat-

ology is a permanent strand in the warp and woof of our faith.

This is true even in the case of those who, though the product of our Christian culture, assume a certain critical detachment from it. Nothing save this is the dominant interest of a writer like H. G. Wells, most clearly set forth in our latest apocalypse, the *Outline of History*.

We look before and after, but particularly, of course, our thoughts reach forward towards the end. No one of us lives to himself alone, or in his own generation alone. What shall be is our concern, and gives what is its meaning. To-day is great because it was to-morrow and shall be yesterday. By itself alone it is unintelligible. The actual status of this present is satisfactory to no one living, however conservative. If the world that is were to be fixed in an eternal state by divine fiat this afternoon, not one of us but would labour frantically to alter some things for the better before the irrevocable moment. The replacement of the existing world-order by an ideal state belongs, in other words, to the very essence of the religious world in which we live. For some of us it is a more pressing concern than for others, for some the immediacy and completeness of the change is more urgent; but we all believe in the end of the world, we all pray: Thy Kingdom come.

It is not unknown to any of you that this conviction of the present world's ending is just now a dominant element in very large sections of Christianity, particularly in the United States, where Protestantism in the west and south is reported to be invaded by this teaching to a degree not unlike that to which second-century Christianity was invaded by Gnosticism. In certain quarters alarm is even felt lest non-millennial

Protestantism should be submerged entirely. Here we have a striking and contemporary instance of the devastation wrought by the exclusive predominance of one element in the complex structure of religion. It is easy for us to grow impatient with such obscurantism and dismiss it with censure or contempt. It is less easy to recognize that if it is a perversion, what has been perverted is something original and genuine.

The appeal in all this Advent propaganda is, of course, to the Bible; its whole basis is an interpretation of Scripture. Those who would rebut it have either to show that in these matters Scripture is not authoritative and final, or else that the interpretation is erroneous. As a matter of fact, both things can be shown. Scarce a decade in the history of the Church from Jesus' time to ours has been without a group of earnest believers who settled upon just those years for the end of this world and the coming of Christ to establish a new one. In every case the time has been fixed by the Scripture text. Now while it is true that the Bible does contain some speculation as to the times and seasons of the eschatological *dénouement*, it gives nowhere the slightest warrant for any of these modern dates. The one idea that all the Biblical writers would unite to fall upon as unqualifiedly false, as the common enemy, is that the world would end in, let us say, 1925. Each one of them cherished with passion the conviction that the world would not be here to end in 1925. Different writers, to be sure, have different periods in mind, but each has in mind his own time, the generation which he addressed. They had no concern with future centuries, they were not even writing for their own grandchildren. They were voicing contemporary expectations, holding forth

visions for the day in which they lived. Even if they had not in mind the current year, at least the current century should see the realization of what they foretold. This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled, is the hall-mark of all genuine eschatology. The message is to those who shall in person witness the advent; *ye* shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Almighty, and coming with the clouds of heaven. There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God *come*, with power. We that are alive, that are left at the coming of the Lord, shall be caught up in the clouds; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. The Revelation is of things which must shortly come to pass; the time is at hand. The Revelator is to partake with his readers in the tribulation and in the kingdom, and in the patience which must bridge the gulf between the two. The New Testament begins with the cry: The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and closes with the assurance from the exalted Christ: Behold, I come quickly. Never in between is the mood of expectancy of an immediately impending crisis lost for a moment.

All this, I say, did not contemplate the readers' great-grandchildren, still less their descendants nineteen or twenty centuries later, but themselves. Even later apologies for an unexpected delay, like 2 Thessalonians and 2 Peter, do not postpone the climax beyond the horizon of the generation addressed. 2 Thessalonians, indeed, argues that the end will not come until the Antichrist pro-

gramme be worked out; yet this very sentence begins with an allusion to "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him," and a slightly earlier passage promises a divine recompense of "affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven." 2 Peter, conceding that from the day the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, and explaining this delay by the patience of God, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, yet promises that the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night, and the writer pertinently asks his readers, "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God?" The modern eschatologists mean their own time when they so confidently set their dates; why can they not see that their predecessors nineteen centuries ago also meant their own time? If the Bible is to be taken as any criterion in the matter, the world should have ended more than eighteen centuries ago at the latest. Thus one thing we can learn from the Bible; the utterly futile folly of fixing times and seasons for a climax to human history. If its own inspired very confident predictions were given the lie by the God of history, the imaginings of our own contemporaries will not be more secure. William Temple (*Foundations*, p. 340) helps to restore the balance with his comment, "The earth will in all probability be habitable for myriads of years yet. If Christianity is the final religion, the Church is still in its infancy. Two thousand years are as two days.

The appeal to the ' primitive church ' is misleading; we are the primitive church."

But our interest in the matter of course does not end here, in pointing out the folly of the millennialists of our own and of former days. Rather does it begin here. For if it be true that this eschatological element, *i.e.* the expectation of the superseding of the present defective world-order by an order more divine, had a considerable history among the Hebrew people and in their sacred writings which we Christians call the Old Testament, we all know also that this expectation found culminating embodiment in the New Testament, specifically, in the faith of the founders of our religion and in that faith's oral and written expression. Coming directly to our main question, we want to know, if we can possibly find out, to what degree and in what sense Jesus himself shared these expectations and how he considered his own person related to their realization. We want to know, further, the bearing of our answer to these questions upon the validity of Jesus' religious message. Let us, then, address ourselves directly to these problems.

We may take for granted, in the readers of these Essays, an acquaintance with the essential features of what is called Israel's Messianic hope. The heart of it was, of course, the burning conviction that some day the complete sovereignty of God would be established, or re-established, in the world. We know how the Jews were in theory theocratic, owning no sovereignty but that of Jahweh their God. Even the establishment of human kings like Saul and David, resisted at first as faithlessness to their divine Lord, had to

adapt itself in theory to the traditional ideal, by making the monarch the vicegerent or earthly representative of God. We know how the bitterest element in the exiles and subjugations later experienced was the humiliating necessity of owning the sway of a pagan ruler, on the part of those who of right owned allegiance to the Most High alone. We know with what passionate zeal and longing the prophets and leaders of the people developed and nourished the hope of a restoration of the Kingship or Sovereignty of God —these words, as well as " Kingdom," expressing the heart of the familiar concept. The sovereignty of God in the national life of the chosen people, over against the sovereignty of Persia or Syria or Rome; the rule of God in the cosmic and spiritual realms, over against the rule of Satan; the dominance of God in the moral and social and religious life of every man, over against the dominance of sin and wrong and unfaith; the world itself transfigured and made new as the Kingdom of God, where he alone should bear rule in every aspect of its material and personal existence.

We know how the thought of God became transcendentalized, leaving this world to the principate of Satan and his ever-increasing hordes of evil spirits. Then the restoration of God's rule must be transcendentalized also, and we have the great system of apocalyptic, which contemplates, not a historical revolution or evolution, by which Israel shall come again to be free, and the Davidic kingdom restored, but a supernatural and catastrophic intervention, wherein God himself, or a heavenly being who should act for him, with angelic powers to do their will, should overthrow every ungodly power and establish in full splendour the universal sway of God. This

apocalyptic conception, for historically obvious reasons, was the dominant one during the century before and the century after Jesus' birth. It reaches its most magnificent expression in a Christian writing, the Apocalypse of John, which reflects the scarcely less splendid pages of earlier Jewish works such as the Books of Enoch. We know that there was no fixed and universally-expected programme, no orthodox Messianism, no settled definition of even such common terms as Kingdom of God, Messiah, end of the age, new heaven and new earth. Simply each prophet or seer or dreamer put into these phrases the fulfilment of his own heart's desire, the utmost accomplishment of his ardent imagination and of his will to believe the best. Various unharmonized elements were not uncommonly held in one and the same mind, with no sense of incongruity or inner demand for consistency. Just how far these expectations were "literal," expected to have realization in that exact form, and how far they were pictorial attempts to describe hoped-for values, is not easy for us to say, nor would it have been easy for those who cherished them. Doubtless this varied much with different individuals. In any case, as we know, the boundary between the literal and the symbolic was less sharply drawn then and there than now and here. The heart of the matter, behind all the varying expectations, of detail was that God should rule—in nature, in the national life, in the personal life religious, moral, social, physical. In this sense the Kingdom of God is the permanent ideal of humanity, now as then and always.

Though we commonly speak of the "Messianic hope" or the "Messianic age," the expectation

of Messiah was secondary and not universal. *That* God's Kingdom should be established was the essential thing, *how* it should be established was another matter. Yet this establishment was scarcely conceived of apart from some human mediator, so strong was the Jewish sense of God's transcendance and the logical difficulty of conceiving his perfect spiritual being operating directly upon mundane material conditions. Even where God was thought of as personally intervening and re-asserting his lost sovereignty, it was supposed that a great prophet, in the spirit and power of one of the old prophets, especially of Elijah, would appear among men, to go before his face and prepare his way. Such a prophet might be called *Messiah, Christos,* the anointed one, since prophets, priests and kings were consecrated or set apart to their work by anointing with oil. So there were those of ecclesiastical and cult propensities who thought of a great priestly figure, who by establishing the worship of the one true God in all temples and all hearts should establish the Kingdom. The Epistle to the Hebrews makes much use of this imagery, as do a few of the Jewish writings, such as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. But in the main we use the term Messiah for the kingly figure, who in the spirit and power, not of prophet or priest, but of David, should act as God's agent in abolishing the old order and establishing the new. He should be King, seizing the Kingship and reigning for a thousand years or even for ever, but always as the vicegerent of God. That he should be conceived as another David was inevitable; equally inevitable that this should come to be understood prosaically and literally, so as to make him a lineal physical son of David, born in David's town

of Bethlehem. How this fits the concept of the heavenly Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with all the holy angels we should not ask. Some held one notion, some the other; most, doubtless, held both.

Kirsopp Lake once remarked that "the Jew is separated from the realm of bliss by time, the Greek by space." The opposition of *now* and *then* dominates Jewish thought of the Kingdom, which is therefore eschatological, concerned with the last things. All duration is divided by a great catastrophe into the age that is and the age to come—this world and the Kingdom of God. The catastrophe is the end of one and the beginning of the other; it is the great day of the Lord. It is notable that the Jewish mind tends rather to fix itself on the coming new than on the passing old; the Kingdom of God is more often the theme of discourse than the end of the world. Herein do our modern millennialists fall short of the ancient standard.

Now all these concepts and all this language form a major and constant element in our New Testament, especially in that portion of it which purports to give the historical tradition as to the mission and proclamation of Jesus. If we should blue-pencil the eschatology in the gospels, we should have nothing intelligible left—we should have no historical motivation for that mission, no historical cause for its tragic end. It is impossible so to treat the record. William Sullivan has well put the case, in his very valuable chapter on "Christ's Conception of the Kingdom," in *Letters to His Holiness*. After citing a great body of Gospel sayings clearly eschatological in content, he comments, "That our Lord should have so spoken, and been so absorbed in the thought of

the world's end and the glorious coming of the Son of Man, if these divine manifestations were in his mind, two, ten or twenty thousand years in the future, wears the look of a simple impossibility."

Now the apocalyptic eschatology of the first century is uncongenial to many modern Christian minds, perhaps to most, save the minds of the pre-millennialists; indeed it became as early as the second century uncongenial to many early Christian minds. It has been got rid of, either explained away or denied. It was explained away dogmatically, or homiletically. The Messiah became the second person of the Godhead, the Kingdom of God became the Christian Church, the *parousia* or advent became the destruction of Jerusalem, and so on. Or the Kingdom became the Christianizing of the individual life, a thousand sermons exploiting that most modern and indispensable of texts, " The Kingdom of God is within you." The Son of Man became the ideal type of humanity, the man in every man; the Advent the yielding of the soul to his saving sway. All this on the tacit assumption that since we do not mean what these words seem to mean, they must mean something other than they seem, something consonant with what we mean. In practice, many an exegete's or preacher's discussion of the question: What was Jesus' thought of the Kingdom? should have been headed: What is *my* thought of the Kingdom?

This interpreting away of the gospel eschatology is still common to-day in many an eminent expounder. It has been very frequent among " liberal " Christian teachers, for whom the figure of Jesus had supreme human values in its moral excellence and wisdom. The eschatology seemed

fantastic or fanatical, lacking in ethical appeal and demonstrated by history as a complete illusion. Jesus is too great to have shared such a discredited view; charge it to his slow-witted disciples, steeped as they were in the visionary speculations of that primitive time, or to reactionary reporters and evangelists, too literalistic to understand the timeless gospel of pure spirit which fell from the Master's lips. With some such approach to the gospel material we are all familiar in our reading. For us the classic expression of it is probably found in the noble pages of the fourth book of Martineau's *Seat of Authority in Religion*. That many local and temporary Jewish ideas permeate the substance of the evangelic narrative, says Dr. Martineau, "is well known, not perhaps without sorrowful regret, to every reader of the synoptic gospels. Not that any one can nowadays suppose these things to form any part of the Divine message of Jesus to the world; for with him, at all events, they are not original; if he is responsible with regard to them at all, it is only for letting them alone. . . . The whole drama had already been written, and photographed in thought, and might haunt the believer's conscience by day, and startle him in dreams and visions of the night. And if Jesus spoke of it, it was as of something given, and not of what he brought. But though the pre-existence of the Messianic idea relieves Jesus of responsibility for its contents, it leaves the question open how far he shared it with his contemporaries, and carried its influence into his ministry." Martineau cannot deny that Jesus *did* share it with his contemporaries, did carry it into his ministry. The evidence is too strong. "This sense of a divine crisis and new spiritual birth is more than the

subject of a parable here, and a denunciation or a blessing there; it is, throughout, the very spring of conviction that disposes of his will and shines through all his public compassions and lonely devotions." So far Martineau goes in one short paragraph: Jesus did assuredly accept the contemporary conception of the Kingdom and did believe it to be literally at hand. "It is one thing, however," he goes on, "to admit his belief in a reign of truth and righteousness as a promise made to the fathers, and now approaching its fulfilment; it is quite another to affirm that in his own person he claimed to realize it as its Prince and Head." In short, Martineau cannot believe that Jesus conceived of himself as the Messiah, and the rest of the section, twenty-nine large pages, is devoted to the disproof of this notion. Here he makes no attempt to disguise his own antipathy to the Messianic concept. He quotes the scene at Cæsarea Philippi, where in response to Jesus' question, Who do ye say that I am?, Peter bursts out as spokesman for the disciples, Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Hereupon, says the Gospel record, Jesus strictly charged his disciples and commanded them to tell no man that he was the Christ. This declaration Martineau, by an ingenious exegesis, turns into "Silence! to not a creature are you to say such a thing again!" (p. 349) and comments (p. 329), "If the disciples had only kept that injunction instead of spending their lives in reversing it, Christendom, I am tempted to think, might have possessed a purer record of genuine revelation, instead of a mixed text of divine truth and false apocalypse. For the first deforming mask, the first robe of hopeless disguise, under which the real personality of Jesus of Nazareth disappeared from sight, were

placed upon him by this very doctrine which was *not* to go forth—that he was the Messiah. It has corrupted the interpretation of the Old Testament, and degraded the sublimest literature of the ancient world into a book of magic and a tissue of riddles. It has spoiled the very composition of the New Testament, and, both in its letters and its narratives, has made the highest influence ever shed upon humanity subservient to the proof of untenable positions and the establishment of unreal relations. . . . That the Messianic theory of the person of Jesus was made for him and palmed upon him by his followers, and was not his own, appears to me a reasonable inference."

It is clear that we have here the will to believe doing its perfect work, rather than the calm judgment of the purely objective critic. And who shall cast the first stone at this kind of criticism? In behalf of his thesis Martineau must admit that he can offer only "several slight but speaking indications." The bulk of the Gospel material is against him, a fact which he explains by the assumption that the "Messianic belief had been busy among the memorials floating in the air, sifting the very leaves that drifted to the compiler's feet; the only wonder is that, with so strong a set of the wind, any shred of history should have slipped beyond the margin and be found upon the field outside." In other words, we have here strong depreciation of the historical value of the gospels, vigorous excision and re-interpretation, in order to get rid of the Messiah-ship. We may feel a very real sympathy with Martineau's conclusion, "The identification, then, of Jesus with the Messianic figure is the first act of Christian mythology, withdrawing man from his own religion to a religion about him," without

thereby feeling justified in adopting his critical expedients for getting rid of an unwelcome element in the historical record.

For in truth—and if I seem here to speak abruptly and categorically, it is because of our limitations of space—in truth we cannot on any legitimate critical grounds excise from our gospels the element which to Martineau and many another has been so antipathetic. It is unassailably there. Not only did Jesus certainly and literally expect the realization of his people's hope in his own generation, but he did believe, at least during the later months of his mission, that to him would be committed the task of carrying out, for his God and Father, that realization. His words of appeal and warning were addressed to his hearers, not to their children or grandchildren or remote descendants. In explicit words he declared that the present generation should not pass away until the eschatological programme should be fulfilled —that among those who stood by and heard his words some should not taste of death till they saw the Kingdom of God come in its power. It was at hand in no laboured unreal sense, but in plainest literal truth. At Cæsarea Philippi he accepted his disciples' ascription to him of the Messiahship, though he forbade them to make it known to others. Repeatedly thereafter he spoke of himself to them as the Son of Man of Daniel's vision, in other words, as the Messiah. Those parables of the last days, in which he pictured a master departing and leaving his affairs in the hands of trusted slaves, whom his sudden return ought to find serving faithfully and fruitfully, illuminate his expected separation from the disciples and his no less certainly expected reunion with them on

a day of reckoning when they must give account of their stewardship. To his Jewish judges, on the last night of his life, when confronted with the solemn question, Art thou the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed? he declared, firmly and with no shade of equivocation, I am, and you shall see me coming as such, to assume the Messiah's task. Over his head, as he hung dying, stood placarded the statement of the charge on which he suffered, the claim to be King of the Jews. On no other pretext could the Sanhedrists have compassed his condemnation by Pilate. And it is obvious that only on his own admission was Pilate willing to pronounce the judgment; repudiation of the charge by Jesus would have secured swift acquittal. It is very obvious also, as has often been pointed out, that had Jesus not when alive accepted the identification with the Messiah, it would never have been spontaneously applied to him after his ignominious defeat and shameful death. The ascription made in days of influence and power, might *survive* the catastrophe; it could not *arise* after the catastrophe. Every consideration makes it absolutely certain that the conviction, Jesus is the Messiah, goes back to his own lifetime, goes back to himself.

Let us, then, try to reconstruct, in broad outline, the historical situation. Some time in the year 28 of the Christian era, apparently, there appeared along the lower course of the Jordan an ascetic preacher who seemed like an incarnation of one of the old prophets. Rough, uncouth, he came proclaiming a message from on high: The Kingdom of God is at hand. Yet this was not in his mouth, as it would have been in the mouths of most of his contemporaries, a glad proclamation

of joy, that after the long night of waiting the dawn of bliss was about to break. Rather it was a stern cry of warning, as who should shout, A flood is at hand! Save himself who can! If we can trust our record of this man John Baptist—a few scanty fragments in all—he spent no time in painting consoling pictures of the joys shortly to be realized, but used the whole energy of his few and precious days to summon the complacent pious in Palestine to such a thorough-going reformation of the very inmost springs of their lives as would fit them for citizenship in a human order where God alone was dominant. It might have been supposed that just as God was expected to invade and master the cosmic order with his cleansing power, and the political order, and the spiritual order, putting there all his enemies under his feet, so he would invade the moral order, in the personal characters and dispositions of men, setting up there also his irresistible sway. But that would be, as this prophet John knew quite as well as we do, an unmoral procedure, quite impossible to the God whom he revered. That God could of the stones beside the river raise up children of Abraham; he could not raise up children of himself, of his own Kingdom, by any such ready-made process. Each must make his own self ready, by an inner purifying and right-about-face of his moral personality, that voluntary act of the human spirit which our Greek Gospels call *Metánoia,* and we somewhat inadequately translate *repentance.* And in solemn token and seal of this definite conversion of self to God and his purposes, John summoned men to baptism. Those who thus underwent inner and outer purifying made up, in the eyes of John as in their own, a nucleus of citizenship for the Kingdom which

was at hand. When it came they could enter at once into its life, perfectly at home there, for what John had led them to do was to assume already, in anticipation, the Kingdom-life. John said nothing of a Messiah, so far as we know, but like Malachi looked for the direct intervention of God, whose right it was to reign. Like Malachi also, he expected that ere God came to seize his rule, he would send before his face a great prophet, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for him. This expectation of John's later Christians naturally but mistakenly took as a prediction of Jesus the Messiah. The prophetic Elijah did not come, the Nazarene Messiah did: of course what John foretold was what came to pass. Jesus saw in John himself the fulfilment of the promised Elijah, and did not look for another. But John himself was more modest; he never thought of himself as standing within the sequence of the eschatological drama, as one of its characters, but rather as upon its outer verge, pointing forward to the imminence of its opening scene. That *he* had been foretold in Scripture he never dreamed.

Among the many converts who thus came confessing their sins and bathing in the stream as a prelude to their newness of life, came also Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized of John in Jordan. There is no adequate evidence, and no historical probability, that at the time John differentiated Jesus from any of his other converts or had any personal knowledge of him. The two men meet, one is powerfully moved by the other, they pass and part. Only from his prison, weeks or months later, does John hear that one of his disciples has taken up his work, and sends to ask,

with newly-kindled hope: Art thou, perhaps, the prophet that should come, or must we still wait for another? Probably he died without an answer to that anguished query.

The baptism was the turning-point in Jesus' life. Our evangelists rightly minimize the baptism with water in favour of that baptism of the spirit which followed; we can not easily describe it save in those graphic pictures which his disciples took from his own lips. In that hour of illumination the heaven was opened unto him, the voice of God spoke into his heart the consciousness of Sonship so deeply that he never again, even in his bitterest agony, lost it—and the consciousness of vocation as well, of a task to be fulfilled, a message to be delivered. And through it all the sense of the divine spirit, the very presence of God, welling into his soul and taking up its abode there, never again to depart. God is with me, the Holy Spirit is within me, guiding, teaching, impelling me to speak the word of God and to manifest the mercy of God to men—such was clearly Jesus' consciousness when he began his ministry. It found expression in his language, the constant reference to his Father; in his deeds of healing and of help; in his strange authority and independence; in his untiring courage, faith, zeal. But the Messiahship was not involved, was not remotely suggested, in his consciousness at this point. There are no traces of that till later.

So Jesus begins his work, at first in substance a continuation of the work of John. He is preparing men for the near realization of the Kingdom. His message is more penetrating, more fundamental than John's, but his task is essentially the same. He touches and moves greater masses

of people, and he does not reinforce his personal work by baptism or by any other rite. The prospective citizenship of the Kingdom is growing. Many are ready, but there is no sign or outward bond of fellowship, no sect or order; only an inner community of consecration and of hope, a common devotion to Jesus and to his ideals. Months pass. John, whom Jesus appraises as the fulfilment of Malachi's expectation of the returning Elijah, has been done to death and it begins to be evident that, humanly speaking, the same fate is sooner or later in store for Jesus. The Kingdom is still *at hand;* it does not come. God delays his manifestation. But Jesus is working for him; he is binding the strong man and conquering the demons; he is expelling sin and inducing repentance and the godly life. In what he is doing the Kingdom is being prepared.

Jesus knows his own spiritual powers, he knows that his religious experience goes beyond that of his fellows; what he yearns to give them is what he already has. Nay, in him already the divine sovereignty is supreme, in one life God rules. These are the last days of the old order; the Elijah has come and has passed; the end is near. But if John had the task of Elijah, what task have I? For I am serving as he served, only my work is more fully blessed of God. Jesus has two great personalities, both somehow involved in the Kingdom's coming, to account for. If John is the Elijah, who is he? Just *how* the transition was made in his own mind, just how and when and why the tremendous suggestion came: "Suppose God means me to be Messiah," we simply do not know. Any Jewish youth might dream of being the Messiah. Jesus was doubtless not the first, as he was certainly not the last, who so dreamed.

Any Jewish mother might whisper rapturously to herself: Perhaps my son is to be he who shall redeem Israel! Yet to trace the genesis of the notion in Jesus' mind is impossible. It is the secret of his inmost consciousness. He felt himself to be a prophet, but something more than a prophet, something more than Jonah is here. Monnier, commenting on this, remarks, "Mais au-dessus des prophètes, il n'y avait que le Messie."

We might speculate at length, but in vain. Out of his religious consciousness of close relationship to God, out of his strong sense of vocation, out of his deep conviction of the Kingdom's nearness, perhaps out of some dim feeling that the Kingdom waited until one should appear willing to assume the tremendous burden for God, somehow grew, slowly, tentatively, the conviction: On me the responsibility shall be laid. It must have come to him at first as a tremendous shock, as something incredible and monstrous; he must have wrestled with it in agony, begging that this cup too might pass from him. The burden becomes too great to be borne alone; the problem finds vent. At Cæsarea Philippi he puts the question to his disciples: Who do men say that I am? Swift comes the answer: John the Baptist; the similarity becomes in some minds identity. Others suggest Elijah (as John himself had); some Jeremiah, or another of the prophets. But all agree that a prophet has arisen among them, mighty in deed and word among all the people. This is true, but it does not go quite far enough, it does not quite exhaust the possibilities in Jesus' own feeling. Has any other mind been visited by the thought that has been torturing his own, or is he mad, presumptuous, blasphem-

ous? What do these who know him best think of him? He puts the decisive question: Who do you say that I am? There is a second's pause, then comes the flash of insight, the clairvoyant *rapport*, the telepathic reading of the other's mind —call it what you will. The rash, impulsive, intuitive Peter it is who speaks, voicing what no one of them, not even himself, had known or dreamed of half an hour before: "Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

So at last it is spoken; for the first time *Jesus* is called *Christ*. How does he take it? Our report of the scene is of course limited to its salient features, as they had significance in apostolic perspective. But it is evident that whatever of uncertainty had lingered in Jesus' mind is now done away, he accepts from Peter's confirming voice what he could not wholly believe at the prompting of his own breast. Perhaps he did not say precisely the words: Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven, but the words are true. No human being had told Peter this great thing, for no human being knew it; it came by flash of what Jesus' contemporaries called by the clear word "revelation," we by the obscure word "intuition." Jesus accepts the identification, yet not explicitly, only tacitly. He does not say in so many words, Yes, Peter, I am the Messiah. He does say, in so many words, with urgent iteration, that what Peter has spoken in the confidence of the group shall on no account be spoken to anyone outside. He charges them strictly that they should tell no man that he was the Messiah. Neither he nor any disciple has spoken it before the present hour, for neither he nor any disciple has been sure of it

until now. Still less has anyone on the outside declared, or guessed, the identification of Jesus with the Messiah. Prophet, yes, but only that. Nothing in Jesus' whole career, nothing in his present activity, could possibly suggest Messiahship. He has not fulfilled one of the prophecies; he has not done one thing the Messiah was expected to do. It is sometimes forgotten how utterly unlike anything in the Messianic expectation was the whole phenomenon of Jesus' mission. The Jewish Messiah was not a saviour or redeemer; God was that. Nowhere in Judaism is it said that the Messiah should be the bringer of a new revelation, that he should be a teacher, that he should deliver men from sin, indeed that he should have any particular relation to religion at all. He was not to be interested in morality or in individuals; not a personal friend, to be known and loved, not a healer of disease or a helper of the poor. Jesus' life was as unmessianic as possible, and could not possibly have suggested the identification to anyone. In the temptation-story we see him deliberately refusing to put any Messianic elements into his life, such things as would have meant the proclamation and exercise of his higher status. As a matter of fact, his Messiahship was not suggested to himself or to Peter by any outward circumstance of his career, but solely from within.

Now this means, of course, that his Messiahship is something future, not something present, something *expectatif*, as the French say, that he was merely *Messias-Kandidat*, as the Germans say. Before we go any further, let us get this point clear. He is not being the Messiah now, he is the one who is to be Messiah; Messiah in person, but not in function. Just as the youthful David was sought out by the prophet in the sheep-folds

of Bethlehem and anointed to a Kingship which was to be his only at God's appointed hour, so Jesus was the anointed one in prospect of a Messianic function to come. Young David had to wait through humble patient years for a day and an hour which he knew not, never taking advantage of what was to come, never anticipating his future powers and prerogatives. So Jesus must be content to know that God has appointed him to the supremest destiny in human history, yet make no slightest assertion before the time. Of that day and hour knew no man, not the angels in heaven, not himself, but the Father only. One thing he did know, that that day of exaltation would be cut off by a great gulf from his present life. The same *person*, he would be another *personality*. His present life as Jesus of Nazareth, teacher and helper of men, must come to an end before his life as the Messiah could begin. And he knew only too well *how* it would come to an end. Elijah had come already and they had done unto him even as they would—and how is it written of the Son of Man! He knew the bitter hostility of the Jewish leaders to him, he knew they meant to have his life, and would in all human probability accomplish their end. There was no way of escape, save the way he would not take. His Father might send twelve legions of angels to his defence, but that he would not ask. At the time he finally admits that he is the Messiah, he already knows that he must die. And this is accepted as the divine will, a part of the wise plan of God. It behoves the Messiah to suffer and so to enter into his glory. He does not suffer as Messiah, he attains the Messiahship by the way of suffering. The idea of a suffering Messiah, the notion that suffering and death were a part of the Messiah's

work, was as foreign to him as to Peter or any other Jew of the time. His rebuke of Peter, who would dissuade him from the path of the passion, is not because Peter is wrong in thinking the function of Messiahship incompatible with suffering, but because Peter would substitute an easier way into his glory than the one God was plainly setting before him, the *per aspera ad astra*.

If Jesus is doing nothing Messianic now, he does not expect to do anything Messianic in the weeks or months that he has still to live. He has discovered in anticipation what is to be his destiny, but not while he remains Jesus of Nazareth. Hence the discovery must remain a secret between himself and his disciples; it must not be proclaimed. A wandering, premature Messiah, with no Kingdom and no power, waiting for a day and an hour which even he did not know, did not lend itself to proclamation. The issue would only be confused, Jesus' real work interfered with, by any announcement that in him the Messiah-to-be was already walking the earth. He charged them strictly that they should tell no man that he was the Christ. And they told no man; the secret was kept through the following weeks and months until the fatal four-and-twenty hours that we call Holy Thursday. It formed the basis of many an intimate and searching talk between Jesus and his Twelve, but neither he nor they spoke it or hinted it outside that circle. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as it is described by Mark, is clearly no ascription or acceptance of Messianic honours, but only the festal reception of an idolized prophet. Matthew and Luke, from their perspective, conscious that in truth it *was* the entrance of the Messiah into his capital, put this element into their account of it. But the whole context reveals the inaccuracy.

When the city, stirred, inquires, Who is this? the reply comes, This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee (Matt. xxi. 11). In the days that follow Jesus faces many questions and discusses many matters of burning concern, but the question, is he or is he not Messiah? is never raised.

He asked no man, outside the Twelve, to accept him as the Messiah, nor would it have had the slightest meaning for the Jews to accept him as Messiah, *as he was*. If we once try to picture to ourselves the ensuing programme if the Jews as a whole had thus accepted him, we shall see that the demand and its acceptance would be equally impossible. We must dismiss from our minds the notion, if by chance we still retain it, that Jesus was martyred because the leaders of his people rejected his claim to be their Messiah. This claim was not rejected; it was never made. The growth of the hostility that culminated in Jesus' death had nothing to do with the idea of his being the Messiah, but rested on fundamental, moral and religious divergences.

The resolution to destroy Jesus is reached by the authorities early; we read it already in Mark iii. 6. Having under the Roman power no right of capital punishment, they were unable for months to carry out their purpose. In vain they tempted him to some speech or action which would incriminate him in the eyes of Rome; even during Passion Week, bent as they were on his speedy destruction, they sought without success for an accusation which would force Pilate to act. Then, on the Thursday, came Judas, one of the Twelve, who knew a secret which would insure his Master's death on the Roman cross, a secret he was willing to betray. And they, when they heard it, were

glad and promised to give him money. This, and this only, is Judas' betrayal—the breaking of Jesus' express command that they should tell no man that he was the Christ. Armed with this information, the Sanhedrists lost no time in arresting Jesus, forcing the Messianic claim from his own lips and dragging him before Pilate with the charge: This Man claims to be Messiah and King. Pilate is reluctantly compelled to act, and in a few hours Jesus is hanging on the cross, with the accusation written above: Jesus of Nazareth —the King of the Jews. Thus the Messiahship, discovered less than twenty-four hours before Jesus' execution, furnished merely the pretext on which the Sanhedrists secured action by Pilate. Failing that, they would have found some other; or there would have been an act of mob violence, such as carried off Stephen, a few years later, or Jesus' own brother James, after long guidance of the Jerusalem Church. In such fashion was the secret betrayed, which Jesus had intended should remain a secret until his advent as the Messiah, when the angels and the opening clouds of heaven should tell the world. Then the tongues of the other disciples were unloosed, and it was assuredly a relief and a joy to them to be able to proclaim freely, God hath made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom ye crucified, and the whole course of the propaganda was deflected into a somewhat different direction. But that is another story.

The evangelists Matthew and Luke, to be sure, do not preserve the original situation so clearly as does Mark their source, but any fair synoptic study of the matter will demonstrate the truth of the position stated. Jesus is thus, to use the felicitous phrase of Holtzmann, his own fore-

runner. Jesus as prophet and teacher is preparing his people for the advent of Jesus as Messiah. And the two functions are kept very carefully distinct in his own consciousness; I had almost said, in his own subconsciousness. We scarcely find him saying, *I* am the Messiah; never saying, when *I* come *again*, but, when the Son of Man comes. It is frequently a source of surprise or of misunderstanding that Jesus always speaks of the Messiah thus in the third person, as of one distinct from himself, usually by adopting the Messianic title *Son of Man*. Art thou the Messiah? I am, and ye shall see the Son of Man—not "me"—the Son of Man coming. In our gospels, indeed in our whole New Testament, we never find the phrase so common in all later Christian speech, "the second coming of Christ." Jesus of Nazareth is here; the *parousia*, the advent or coming of the Messiah, is yet future.

It is true, then, that Jesus believed God had chosen him to be the Messiah, that he shared this expectation with his disciples, that its betrayal played a notable part in the circumstances of his death. But having said this much, we have said very little that is really significant; we have not at all described the essential thing in him or in his mission. All this might have been true without in the least entitling him to our veneration to-day, or making it worth our while to discuss him in a volume like this. Other Jews might have the same notion of their destiny. As a matter of fact, other Jews had it, and came to defeat and death, as he did. We have forgotten them; we cannot forget him. He is vital in our religion, not even remotely because he was the Messiah, or because he thought he was, but because of a contribution to the higher life of man that lay quite

outside the sphere of eschatology. Not as Christ, but as Jesus, he did the great work of spiritual emancipation which makes him the master of the centuries.

Albert Schweitzer and a few others, in the ardour of discovering that Jesus held a genuine and literal eschatology, have declared that this invalidates entirely his ethical teaching for any later time and any other situation; specifically, for our own. He taught simply an *interims-ethik*, they say, a morality of the interval, brief as it was, before the great crisis. He counselled how to act in view of that crisis, not how to live ideally human lives in an enduring world. It is true that Jesus might have taught an interim-ethics. Paul did so, some years later, in a famous letter to the church in Corinth (not in the great bulk of his moral teachings). "If thou marry, thou hast not sinned, and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh, and I would spare you. But this I say, brethren, that the time is shortened, so that henceforth those that have wives should be as though they had none, and those that weep as though they wept not, and those that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and those that buy as though they possessed not, and those that use the world as not using it to the full—for the fashion of this world is passing away. And I would have you to be free from cares." There is interim-ethics, in clear expression. John Baptist's demand for baptism was of the same sort. But there is nothing of this in Jesus. He does not demand any strange thing, any special, extra, peculiar behaviour, valuable to secure a place in the coming reign of bliss, but with no absolute significance. The matter may be stated

in a sentence. Jesus' declaration is simply: The way to gain entrance to the Kingdom is to live as if you were already in it. Begin to live the Kingdom-life now; then when the Kingdom comes you will simply and naturally find yourself a part of it, because you are already, in character and deed, of its citizenship.

Jesus as a moral genius had his vision of the ideal human life, life lived in the closest intimacy with God, wholly submissive to his will, complete in love and goodness to all the brothers and sisters in the human family. That ideal he believed, of course, would be realized in the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the living of that life by all men everywhere would *constitute* the Kingdom of God, on its inward side. It is that ideal which he urges in his ethical counsels; it is to be judged on its own merits, as a type of personal and social living. Its value is not in the least contingent on the fact that its proclaimer expected soon to see it realized on a universal scale in the earthly scene—and was mistaken in so expecting. As a matter of fact, the ethical teaching is not eschatological at all. Even where it is related to some aspect of the expected change, the connection is superficial and in no sense necessary. We read the Sermon on the Mount, and live by it, in our degree, without the slightest reference to the end of the world. It is as valid in one human situation as in another. It is notable that in all these counsels, the image that dominates the mind of Jesus in thinking of the perfect life with God is not the image of the Kingdom at all, but the image of the *family;* not subjects under the sway of a monarch, but children living in perfect affection and intimacy with a Father of tenderness and infinite bounty. Though his inherited term is the Kingdom of God, he never

once, in any original utterance, calls God *King*, but always and only Father. The religious experience of the man Jesus is thus seen crowding into the background the traditional eschatology which he accepts from his time; and the common Christian consciousness is right, however uncritical, in reading the gospels to the soul's profit, as counsels of eternity unrelated to the apocalytic expectation of ancient Jews.

Jesus as he lived and taught, then, may be judged apart from these expectations. Into that life the eschatology, the Kingdom and the Messiah, came only as a dream, a hope, a confident expectation of a future realization. The actual course of his life and teaching is left unaffected; it would have gone on, practically the same in substance, if he had never dreamed of himself as the Messiah. What difference did it make who was to be Messiah? Men's duty to prepare, to live as God's men, was still the same, and that moral preparation gave Jesus his whole mission. Still would he have proclaimed, as John did before him, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent and believe in the gospel!" Still would he have burned to make his own filial consciousness the portion of all his fellows in their relation to God. Still would he have cherished his great ideal of the brotherly and self-forgetting life as the will of God for the citizenship of his Kingdom, still would he have incurred all the hostility and the hatred of the Pharisees and the Jewish spiritual aristocracy for his mordant strictures on their practice of piety. Still would they have taken counsel together how they might destroy him, and still would they have found means to carry out their evil purpose. If we should eliminate all the personal eschatology, as Jesus did in his outward deed and word, we should

still have substantially the same Jesus left. Some intimate talks with the disciples would fail, some earnest counsels for their future, some other pretext would have to be found for his murder at the end, but the main body of his public teaching and of his mission of help and healing would remain untouched.

Doubtless his conviction of the near end of the present order somewhat clarified his vision and set the values of life in a truer proportion for him. B. H. Streeter has written (*Foundations*, p. 119): "The summits of certain mountains are seen only at rare moments when, their cloud-cap rolled away, they stand out stark and clear. So in ordinary life ultimate values and eternal issues are normally obscured by minor duties, petty cares and small ambitions; at the bedside of a dying man the cloud is often lifted. In virtue of the eschatological hope our Lord and his first disciples found themselves standing, as it were, at the bedside of a dying world. Thus for a whole generation the cloud of lesser interests was rolled away, and ultimate values and eternal issues stood out before them stark and clear, as never before or since in the history of our race." This was of incalculable import. Doubtless also the solemn sense of their impending change gave an urgency to Jesus' work that was a great factor in its power, gave him a sense of vocation and dedication perhaps unequalled in history. In a hundred ways, of course, the eschatology acted as a shaping influence; it furnished the frame for the whole mission, but it was never the thing framed.

It is often said that Jesus changed or reconceived or spiritualized the current conception of the Messiah. In the sense in which this statement is usually meant, it is wholly untrue. He

did not exercise criticism on the contemporary ideal, always remembering that one fixed, standardized ideal did not exist. But by postponing his entire Messianic career to a period beyond his present life, he did effect a tremendous shifting of psychological values. When you or I say "Messiah" we mean rank, exaltation, dignity; just these connotations were in mind when the word was used by any ancient Jew—except Jesus. For him alone, who expected to assume the rôle, the word meant not exaltation, but service, not *Gabe*, but *Aufgabe*, as the Germans say. It was a tremendous *task*, which he accepted with trembling hands only because he believed his Father laid it upon him. The seat on the right hand of God, the subjection of all enemies under his feet, the name that is above every name: these were not the visions that thronged his mind when Peter exclaimed: "Thou art the Christ"; rather the sense of a supreme responsibility, a superhuman obligation, a task to do for God. Conceiving it thus, Jesus' acceptance of the rôle is little short of sublime. It is an act of supreme courage and self-dedication. A hundred prophets, a thousand dreamers, had talked of the Kingdom as the slow years passed, with no sense of personal responsibility in the matter, but only a passive waiting upon God. Psychologically what comes to Jesus is the willingness to do something about it, to offer himself as the instrument of the divine will; the feeling: Why wait for ever for a Messiah to come? The Kingdom of God is at hand. I am the man for whom the ages have waited. The spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed *me*, not someone else, to proclaim release to the captives, the acceptable year of the Lord. Lesser men wait and look for Messiahs to come. Great men *are* Messiahs.

I do not mean to imply, of course, that these reflections went consciously through Jesus' mind, but only to suggest that the whole thing was for him the offering of himself for the accomplishment of a supreme service for which God and man could no longer wait.

Involved in the acceptance of the task was acceptance of the way that all too clearly led to the assumption of the task—the way of shame, of suffering, of death. Messiah must enter into his glory by the Passion. Already before his searching question had drawn out Peter's inspired answer, he had faced the fact that he must die, had accepted it and made himself at home in it, because it was God's way. Hence his constant use to his disciples, from that time on, of the Danielic title "Son of Man." He might have said "Messiah," or one of many other phrases, but the phrase of Daniel supplied the precise solution of the situation. The Son of Man comes from the upper world, on the clouds of heaven, with angelic hosts—*he* is a man already on earth. The passage from one state to the other of course involves death, the end of the present earth-life and the transition to the heavens. Hence he knows that he must die —and that he must rise from the dead. It must never be forgotten that Jesus did not at any point accept Messiahship as exaltation alone; he accepted it only when it had already come to include the prelude of the passion. The antinomy which Peter could not tamely accept was no antinomy to Jesus, but a clear path which his feet were already pressing, a goal towards which his face was already set.

We may, then, remove the Messiahship altogether from the career of Jesus, as Martineau and

many another have wanted to do; not arbitrarily, by violence to our sources, but historically, because he did the same. His career as Messiah was to begin where his career as the prophet of Nazareth closed—the two were not to overlap. This is not only his own clear consciousness; it is the clear understanding of Paul and the Christians of the first generation. He was born, says the apostle, of the seed of David according to the flesh, and established as the Son of God with power, *i. e.* the Messiah, by the resurrection of the dead (Rom. i. 3). He had stooped in his service to his fellows to the endurance of death, yea, the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God highly exalted him and gave him the name which is above every name the title and dignity of Messiah. So the primitive preaching, as described in Acts, declared to the hostile Jews, "God *hath made* him both Master and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." They had seen him perish as Jesus; they looked eagerly forward to his advent as Christ, the Son of Man. There was no confusion here.

But the days passed, and the months and the years, and so the generations—and he came not. He is more and more, to larger circles, proclaimed as the Messiah, but as the advent hope grows dim, the Messianic values which find no realization in a second appearance, are insensibly put back into the first—and only—appearance. Since he *is* the Messiah, and has not come again, he must have been the Messiah when here. Gradually, unconsciously at first, the earthly career is Messianized; there are placed the fulfilments and the functioning. The process has not gone very far or struck very deep, in Mark, but it has overlaid the mission with a tinge of Messianic colour. The ecstatic experience which followed Jesus' baptism by John,

the anointing with the Holy Spirit, was the moment when he became the Anointed, and all that follows is, in some sense not very clearly apprehended by Mark, the career of the Messiah. But Mark makes no great attempt to force it into conformity with the programme expected of the Messiah. Matthew, later, is more thoroughgoing. For him, Jesus was born Son of God. His establishment as the Messiah coincides with his entrance on the human stage; hence the virgin birth. Matthew, moreover, does unsuccessfully try to conform the story to the prophecies and the current ideas of what was expected of the Messiah. Hence his frequent proof-texts and his laboured adjustments of the minor and unessential details of the historic life to alleged prophecies. He cannot, of course, successfully Messianize the outstanding essential elements in Jesus, and scarcely attempts to do so. Luke occupies substantially the position of Mark, though he too has birth stories, which are a kind of prophetic prologue, wherein most of the later values find poetic expression. Finally the Fourth Evangelist, by identifying the Messiah with the Logos, pushes back to the beginning of all things the moment which coincides for Paul with the resurrection, for Mark with the baptism, for Matthew with the birth.

Strip off, then, from the gospels this Messianic colour; set it over, as Jesus did in his own thought, into the period subsequent to Good Friday, and you have the Jesus who is truly historical. For it cannot be too clearly emphasized that the Jesus, who made the supreme contribution to the world's religious life, the Jesus whose disciples it is our salvation to be, is the Jesus of the first period, of the human life, the prophet of Nazareth, preparing

men for the coming of the Kingdom—not the Jesus of the second period (as he conceived it), the Jesus who is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, the Leader of the heavenly hosts sweeping away the kingdoms of this world, the Judge on his throne, the King to whom angels and men are subject. That Jesus was a contemporary notion never realized in actual reality. We are saved by the Jesus who came, not by the Christ who has not come. The only Jesus who ever existed at all was the non-Messianic Jesus of human history, the teacher, the prophet, the friend of man, the martyr. The other, to which he looked forward, came not; we may let it fade like the dream it so surely is. But the Jesus who did live, who did teach, who did die, who did embody the supremest values humanity has ever known (and, let my faith say, who lives to-day the immortal life with God) this Jesus, a figure non-Messianic, non-eschatological, in whom God came nearest to man and in whose discipleship the world must ultimately be transformed into the Kingdom of God, this Jesus stands ever more secure and potent as the centuries pass and the reverent study of his followers apprehends more certainly what he really was, apart from contemporary dream or later dogma.

Jesus was mistaken, let us say frankly, as to the nearness of the Kingdom and the way in which it was to come to realization through him. But this mistake is a small and unessential matter. His great convictions were true. It is true, or else we are of all men most miserable, that God has in store for his children a diviner social order than that in which we now live. It is true that the coming of this order shall mean the absolute dominance of God in every life, in every aspect of

the world. It is true that such a perfect world-order cannot descend upon us ready-made and involve us in its blessed life automatically, that we can enter in only as we are inwardly prepared and purified, made men and women of the Kingdom type. And it is true, is it not, that when this order comes, as come it must, it will be largely the work of Jesus of Nazareth. As men look back in that happy day over the long historic process which brought them to that estate, they shall see that Jesus was captain in the well-fought fight, that his was the great inspiration, the great enunciation of principles, the great dynamic; the victory shall be his victory, and the Kingship his of right. His shall be, not theologically or mystically, but literally and historically, the name that is above every name, the seat—not on the throne of the world—but at the right hand of that God whose is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Note.—The chief part of this Essay is drawn from a paper read before the Berry Street Conference of Unitarian Ministers in Boston, Massachusetts, on May 25, 1921, which was first printed in the *Quarterly Bulletin* of the Meadville Theological School for January, 1922, and later issued in pamphlet form (*Memorable Sermons*, No. 23) by the American Unitarian Association. Two other printed lectures of the writer have also been drawn upon and the whole has undergone some revision.

VII

THE VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS

By Henry Gow

The Rev. Henry Gow was born in 1861, and was educated at Owens College, Manchester, and Manchester New College, London, graduating B.A. (Lond. 1881). As a Hibbert Scholar he studied at the Universities of Jena, Berlin, and Harvard. Subsequently he received the Degree of D.D. from Meadville, U.S.A. He has held the following appointments: Unitarian Minister, London, Mansford Street, 1890–93; Leicester, Great Meeting, 1893–1902; London, Hampstead, 1902–21; Warden and Lecturer on the New Testament at Manchester College, Oxford, since 1921; President of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 1923–24. His publications include a volume of Sermons in connection with the Great War, *Out of the Heart of the Storm;* and articles in *The Hibbert Journal* and other Reviews.

THE VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS

THE question with which we are specially concerned, in this Essay, is that of the value, significance, and influence of Jesus, regarded from the point of view of his humanity. Belief in Jesus as a human being may be held and expressed in different ways; but essentially it implies that in the individuality of Jesus, called the Christ, *there was but one consciousness, one will.*

A hundred years ago, Unitarians based their belief in the humanity of Jesus on the Gospels taken as a whole. Orthodox and unorthodox contended with each other by quoting texts. There was little critical knowledge as to the sources or historical truth of the Gospels. Unitarians did good by calling attention to the purely human side of the life of Jesus and by emphasizing the supreme importance of his moral and spiritual teaching. It was well to remind men of the fundamental necessity of righteousness and love as against the idea that beliefs about Christ were the essential thing.

The character and temper of our Unitarian ancestors a hundred years ago was in accordance with their faith. They were strong and simple and sincere. They were stern with themselves and sympathetic towards others. In business life they were entirely trustworthy, with a high sense of honour and integrity. They were foremost in their town among those who were working for education and for civil and religious liberty. It

was a type of character akin to the best among the Society of Friends, but Puritan as they were, there was less austerity and less fear of the world and its beauty and joy than there was among many of the Quakers. The early Unitarians did not find or make life so burdensome, and did not feel their sphere of action and thought so restricted as the Quakers did. The God who was revealed to them by the life and teaching of Jesus was full of love; they were freed from the obsession of eternal Hell, but they loved righteousness and revered Jesus more, not less, through that freedom.

In the years that have passed since then the whole problem of New Testament Interpretation has assumed another form. We see many legendary elements in the Gospels which were not realized by our ancestors. One text is not as good as another. We see discrepancies, errors, exaggerations, in the Gospel stories. Even orthodox scholars have to admit this. They cannot take all the Gospels exactly as they stand and claim that all the statements contained in them are equally historical. It is a question of degree. The modern Unitarian recognizes more fully than the Unitarian of a hundred years ago that there are passages in the Gospels which were written by men who thought of Jesus as more than man. It may be difficult to get the Trinity out of the Gospels as they stand, but it is more difficult to get the absolute humanity of Jesus. There are many passages indeed which, if read in isolation, imply that Jesus was a man and nothing more than a man, but there are other passages which cannot be justly interpreted in terms of his pure humanity. We do not deny the meaning of these passages, but we see in them the interpretation of his disciples under the influence of the spirit of

Jesus and under the influence of the spirit of their time. We believe in the humanity of Jesus, not because we can show that every word in the Gospels proves him to be a man, but because through wider and deeper knowledge of history we can see how these misinterpretations arose.

The reasons for a belief in the humanity of Jesus are stronger and more cogent than they were a century ago; and the number of people who regard Jesus as a man and nothing more is incalculably larger. The orthodox view of the Deity of Christ is everywhere breaking down under the influence of modern Biblical criticism. On the other hand, the humanitarian view of Jesus has no special connection with agnosticism. The orthodox view in this respect is more akin to agnosticism, or a despair of any *non-miraculous* knowledge of God. There are some who often declare that if they did not believe in the Deity of Jesus they would not believe in any God at all. They have no faith in God apart from their faith that Jesus was God. If they lost Jesus, they would lose God. All that Prophets, Poets, and Philosophers have felt and thought about God, all visions of eternal love which have come to the simple and devout, have no solid truth in them apart from Christ. That is not the universal view of orthodox evangelicalism, but it is very common : " apart from Jesus I have no assurance of God." It is essentially an agnostic view.

We hold that belief in God as Father and Friend would remain if Jesus were proved to be a myth. We do not believe he was a myth. We believe he was a real person and we find in his words and his life a revelation of God. But it may be confidently affirmed that no Unitarian would

say, "apart from Jesus I have no assurance of God." We have more confidence in the human mind and the human spirit as capable of knowing something of God, and coming into personal communion with the Eternal. Unitarianism, strange as it may sound, is much less agnostic than orthodox Christianity. It believes in God not merely on the authority of Christ or the Church, but on the authority of reason and conscience. We do not merely believe that Jesus was a man. That by itself is neither a religious nor an irreligious statement. What we believe in is the God and Father in whom Jesus believed, of whom Prophets, Poets and Philosophers speak, and to whom our own spirit bears witness. Our faith in God does not depend on belief in the Deity of Christ. It is strengthened and purified by our reverence for Jesus, but it is based on a more catholic interpretation of history; and we have more trust in the objective value of great religious experiences than is recognized by the man who says that apart from Christ he knows nothing of God.

No doubt there are some who, after having understood and accepted the modern critical and historical view of the composition of the Gospels and the relation of Jesus to his own and preceding ages, are inclined to regard him as of comparatively small account in their own life and the life of the world. Everyone must admit that Jesus has been a great and indeed a unique figure in history, and that beliefs about him have excited and are still exciting immense influence. But if Jesus was altogether human and the orthodox Christologies have been altogether wrong, there is a tendency among clear-thinking rationalists to deprecate making too much of Jesus either as a

personality or as a teacher. After all, we know comparatively little about him. His words have come down to us, as it were, haphazard, mixed up with many mistakes, and his life is distorted by miracles and legends. There are, of course, some fine thoughts in the Gospels, but in most cases parallels to them may be found in the Old Testament or in Plato. There are sayings of his which, in their full literal significance, no one, not even a Quaker, attempts to obey. For individuals, and still more for Societies, a full obedience to all the sayings of Jesus is impossible. If Jesus was not, in a unique sense, the son of God, then it is surely a mistake to regard him as of such very great importance in our religious life. That is a point of view to be found among Unitarians.

On the other hand, there is the sentimental view, sometimes a real if unintelligent attachment, sometimes a mere sentimental way of talking about Jesus as a beautiful and inspiring example, which it is hard to justify. There is a good deal of superstition often mixed up with such sentimentality. It is not rationally justified: there is no basis in thought for the feeling, there is even no basis in experience. It is a survival from orthodox feeling: it is a pale shadow of orthodoxy without the substance of orthodox belief. We think we ought to go on cherishing the same feeling about a person which was felt by former ages although he is a quite different person from what they thought. Let us clear our minds of such sentiment. It is idle to claim that inevitably Jesus means more and not less for the Unitarian than he does for the Evangelical or the Catholic Christian, and that his value and significance are greater because he is an imitable man and not an

inimitable God. It is idle even to claim that inevitably he means as much for the Unitarian as for orthodoxy.

If we are compelled, in the interests of historical truth, to reject the orthodox interpretation of the life and purpose of Jesus, let us not be blind to what that interpretation has meant and does mean for those who accept it. Accept the orthodox interpretation, and Jesus is absolutely central in religion, indisputably all-important. In the Wisdom of God, God sent his Son into the world to save the world. That Son was himself, in some sense, God. There was a divine interposition in history, unique in its character and purpose, bringing to man a new, miraculous, and, in a sense, final revelation of truth.

God interfered in history, he broke the silence, he did what he had never done before and may never do again. He came down to earth in the person of his Son, who existed with him from the beginning and he manifested his love and his glory to all the world. Jesus taught something, therefore, of supreme importance; and still more, he *was* something of supreme importance. His life was not so much a pattern for men as a final revelation of God. He worked miracles to prove his Deity. He died, according to divine determination, to save men from their sins; and he rose from the dead because he was God. He is essentially superhuman and miraculous, although in one part of his nature he shares in our humanity and makes men realize that through him they also are one with God.

Robert Browning's lines in *An Epistle* express something of the feeling of devotion and exaltation which comes to a man who sees, even for a moment, this point of view.

" This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As—God forgive me ! who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile !
* * * * * * *
The very God ! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, ' O heart I made, a heart beats here !
Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself !
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee.' "

Now for Modernists in general and Unitarians in particular this conception of Jesus as God is impossible. We must not cover up what we believe to be the fact behind vague sentimentality; we must not imagine that Jesus remains essentially the same for us as for orthodoxy, or even claim that our conception involves no loss and that it is altogether gain.

For those who believe in God it is natural to believe that all truth is gain in so far as it gives wider, deeper conceptions of reality. This faith in truth is altogether justified in relation to Nature. The discoveries of Geology, Astronomy or Physics make the world more wonderful and mysterious and sublime than it was before. But it is not necessarily true in history when the human element is involved. To the historian some characters which have been revered may be seen to be less worthy of reverence or admiration than was imagined. To get rid of the clouds of legend or superstition may leave a character less great and impressive than before. Historical investigation may bring down the mighty from their seats as well as exalt them of low degree. Truth in history may involve disillusionment and

disappointment in characters we have admired. Truth in Nature never, in its final outcome, involves disillusionment, because in this case we are dealing with the direct handiwork of God.

We must express our critical views then, with regard to Jesus, not asserting beforehand that we are quite certain that the result will be to leave Jesus of more value to religion and more exalted in character than he was before. We accept the truth even if it is disappointing, even if it seems to leave us poorer in our religious life. We can have no assurance, however strong our faith in God, that particular facts or characters in history will turn out to be exactly what we wish. "Self-evidence," says Professor C. C. J. Webb, of Oxford, "can never be claimed for historical statements at all. There must be a fundamental uncertainty about all *historical religions*. A saying, a precept, a thought of Jesus may be self-evident, but his character as a whole is not self-evident. We cannot be absolutely certain that he was the best man that ever lived, or that he was supremely good: still less that he was God. His supernatural birth is certainly not self-evident, nor his supernatural resurrection."

For the Unitarian, then, Jesus was not born of a virgin, he did not work miracles over Nature, or raise the dead. In so far as he healed the sick, it was in consequence of human powers of love and faith which are not yet fully understood but which, so far as he really possessed them, must be regarded as entirely human. He did not rise from the dead in the same body in which he was buried. His disciples were mistaken if they thought this, although they may have been right in believing that his spirit was with them after his death and that they were in communion with

him. This negative view of the narratives given in the Gospels is more and more generally held by unprejudiced historians. It is based on the discrepancies in the Gospels themselves, on the study of the origin of the Gospels and the atmosphere in which they were written, on a wider view of history and on more knowledge of Comparative Religion.

Bishop Charles Gore has much to say, in his recent book on *Belief in Christ*, with regard to the bias of the modern mind against miracles. He declares that men may be "hypnotized by unorthodox presuppositions." And in another place he says, "It is my belief that a great deal of scepticism is due, not really to the absence of adequate grounds of conviction, but to confusion of mind, to an excessive deference to certain intellectual fashions and to the fact that a man has never thought and systematically faced the problems. . . . What is called 'free thought' is really thought enslaved to a negative dogma which is not really valid: viz. that the sort of redemptive action of a personal God which the Bible professes to record cannot really have occurred."

No doubt there is wholesome warning against intellectual and critical pride in such words. A negative attitude towards doctrines widely held does not always mean a freer spirit than a devout belief in them. Scepticism is often a fashion, and a foolish fashion. But the argument as applied to the modernist view of history, as the orthodox often do apply it, ignores the immense amount of work done by learned unprejudiced students of religious history during the last century. They have not been "prejudiced in favour of negative views." They have been misrepresented, attacked, condemned. They have imperilled their position,

their livelihood, even their characters. They have endured much suffering and loss. They were not in the fashion, they were altogether out of it. They have had to live, as it were, in a corner, without the influence which was their due. That has been the history of Unitarian thinkers and of many great Liberal Christian scholars who have dared to set forth humanitarian views of Jesus. It is more fashionable now to accept such views, although the religious body which is identified with such views, and which has insisted that there is still a Gospel for those who believe Jesus was a man, is even now slighted and unpopular.

Bishop Gore is mistaken if he thinks that it is fashion and prejudice which are the cause of the rejection of the Godhead of Jesus. It is based on deeper historical research, on truer scientific conceptions of the world and of human history. Many, no doubt, accept to-day the result of such profound investigations without their discipline, but the basis of such negative views as to miracles and the Deity of Jesus is not fashion, but wider knowledge and deeper insight into truth.

It is not my purpose, however, to argue the case for the humanitarian view of Jesus. This Essay is concerned with the question, What does Jesus signify, what is his value for our religious life if we have been compelled by our reason to regard him as entirely human? There can be no doubt that the orthodox theory of the Deity of Jesus is wearing very thin, and that the weight of evidence is against it. What then remains to us of value in the life and teaching of Jesus if he was a man?

It is well to realize that the assertion, "Jesus was a man," a very good man or even the best of men, is not in itself a religious assertion. It does

not in itself involve any faith in God. A materialist, who has no hope of another life and for whom love and goodness are just passing and beautiful phenomena, might say the same. No man can be without some belief in God who accepts the orthodox position. Any man who accepts the humanitarian view of Jesus may be a sceptic. Whatever else orthodoxy means, it must mean that there is a divine Love behind and within and above the world, revealing itself in the world, breaking in on a closed system of law and material forces. All the wildest superstitions involve belief in some Divine Power, the belief in a spirit or spirits, which are behind material phenomena. Orthodox Christianity involves the belief in the Mystery of an immanent Divine Love working in and on the world. No man can be an atheist or an agnostic who accepts the orthodox view of Jesus. Any man *might* be an atheist or agnostic who accepts the pure humanity of Jesus. This means that the assertion "Jesus was a man" is not a religious assertion. You cannot make the mere assertion of the humanity of Jesus the basis of a religious faith. You can make the Deity of Jesus the basis of a religious faith.

The story of a human Jesus as told by a modern critical historian does not necessarily exert a strong religious influence. It is the story of a good man who gave some wise ethical advice and who evidently had himself a strong faith in God. He led a wandering life, proclaiming the end of the world and the coming of the Kingdom of God. He called all men to repent, and regarded himself as having a special divine mission to instruct and influence and lead his people. He was pitiful and kind and brave. Through his outspoken condemnation of official hypocrisy and

his indifference to the minute details of the Law and his claim to divine authority, he offended and frightened the Jewish leaders. He died a miserable death upon the cross as a criminal, but in some strange way his words and his influence were preserved and continued, and became the seed of the Christian Church. It is quite possible to read this story and not to believe in God. We might hold that Jesus was not sent by God, and that if he thought so, he was mistaken. We might hold that, so far as Jesus was concerned, there is no reason to suppose there was any God who could have sent him. His belief in God is no proof of God. His goodness and love are no proof of God. We know no more of God when we have read the Gospels in that spirit than when we have read the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon about Socrates.

What we think of the New Testament and of Jesus depends to some extent on what we think of the Old Testament. If we take the Gospels by themselves we are in danger of misunderstanding them. Dr. Gore seems to me in one respect curiously wrong and in another respect strikingly right in his treatment of the relationship of the Old and New Testaments. He deals with the Old Testament as a modern scholar and critical historian. He sees quite clearly the legendary elements in the stories. He realizes the partial and imperfect conception of the character of God. He sees in it a human record and he does not consider it necessary to accept miracles ascribed to Patriarchs or Prophets. But when he comes to the New Testament, and especially the Gospel narratives, he is no longer the impartial historian. He accepts all the miracles, even the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of the body. He is afraid of giving up anything for fear of losing the Deity of

Christ. To turn from Dr. Gore on the Old Testament to Dr. Gore on the New Testament is to turn from the free critical historian to the apologist, from the man prepared without preconceptions to sift and criticize the facts to the man with an intense conviction of the truth of orthodoxy and a feeling of the absolute necessity of accepting the whole Gospel story. In this distinction of method and spirit in dealing with the Old and New Testaments Dr. Gore seems to me curiously wrong.

On the other hand, in asserting that the Old Testament is a preparation for the New, that the God revealed in the Prophets and Psalmist is the God revealed by Jesus, Dr. Gore seems to me certainly right. In other words, the personal God of the Old Testament, awful in his righteousness, infinite in his majesty, and yet a loving Father, a Good Shepherd, caring for his children, is a conception of God, however dimly understood, which is true. There is a real revelation of the will and character of God given through Prophets and Psalmists. We need not claim that it was confined to them. There is a revelation of God through all great Prophets and Poets of every race and age, but we must not reduce the revelation given in the Old Testament to the Greatest Common Measure of them all. There is something distinctive and of unique value in the knowledge of God given to us in the noblest utterances of the Old Testament.

" Is it true," asks Dr. Gore, " that the Prophets and Jesus Christ, the successor of the Prophets, were, as they claimed to be, in such close contact with the Eternal Reality that they could, in speaking as they did of God and communicating His word to men, ' speak that they did know and

testify that they had seen or heard'? For my own part, having studied the Prophets and the Gospels all my life long and asked myself the crucial question more times than I could enumerate, I can give but one answer. I believe the claim to be true. It is a momentous decision morally and it is momentous no less intellectually, because if I mistake not it dominates the intellectual situation." This is to believe in Revelation. It does not prove that Jesus was God: it does not prove that Jesus worked miracles, but it does suggest that he belongs to a long series of inspired men, raised up by the providence of God for a special work. It means that he is no haphazard appearance, no subjective dreamer, no teacher merely of his own or other people's doctrines, but that there was a divine purpose and meaning in his work and his life.

What we think of Jesus depends on what we think of God, and especially of God revealed in history and literature. If history is a merely secular affair in which men are learning more or less successfully to live together in comfort, if it is just a utilitarian development of law and morality in accordance with an original constitution of things, then to expect to find any divine Revelation in history would be vain. All we mean by God in that case is a certain ultimate Law of Righteousness which sets limits to the erratic wanderings of men and slowly compels them by hard experience in the direction of peace and justice. Individual men and women, good and bad, wise and foolish, turn up as it were by chance, or, if you prefer it, as the result of their own free-will, choosing to be good or bad, wise or foolish. All the God we find in history is a general tendency, not ourselves, which makes for

righteousness. It would be the same with literature. The Philosopher, the Poet, the Prophet, express great thoughts and ideas, they have imagination and see visions, they are in contact with the Unseen Reality, but it is no special Providence which sends them to do this. It is the result of their own brains and their ancestry and the conditions of their life and of the subtle working of universal Law and of their own individual will, working upon their chance prepossessions. That is a very general view about great men. What they do and are is the product of their age and of the original constitution of things and to some extent of their own free-will. God has nothing to do with it, except so far as he was responsible for the beginning of everything. He is a passive, sympathetic spectator, watching men work out their own salvation and finding the truth along the lines which he has laid down from the foundation of the world. No man at his best feels this. He feels he has a mission, he feels himself inspired, he feels he has been sent. He is not a mere mixture of his ancestors or a product of his age. His life has been given him by God for a purpose. The more men are conscious of themselves and aware of power, the more truth they see, the more good they do, so much the more do they feel that they are called by God, sent by God, and that they have a divine commission.

That is the Pauline view of history, which is one of the most significant elements in the Apostle's thought. "But it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." A similar conviction is universal in the Prophets of the Old Testament. It is to be found everywhere in all

ages and religions, among martyrs, saints, poets and reformers, expressed in various ways. The phraseology varies, but the fact of a divine call, a unique purpose in their lives, an individual relationship to God or to Christ, is common to them all. This sense of a personal commission is expressed by Milton in the well-known sonnet written in his twenty-third year :

> " Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
> It shall be still in strictest measure even
> To that same lot, however mean or high,
> Towards which time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
> All is, if I have grace to use it so,
> As ever in my great Task-master's eye."

So also in the Fourth Book of Wordsworth's *Prelude :*

> " My heart was full : I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me : bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated spirit. On I walked
> In thankful blessedness, which yet survives."

It may be said generally that the greater the saint, the more profound the thinker, the more devoted and self-sacrificing the idealist, the more he feels himself sent by God, inspired by God, and the less he feels that it is he himself by his own freewill, or he himself as the product of his age, who is responsible for his achievements. That is the psychological fact, explain it as we may. Those men of profoundest thought and imagination, of most passionate love for their fellow-men and most devoted power of service, feel God in them and with them. Their lives are not their own, they are dedicated, not self-dedicated, spirits. They have a work committed to them by God. There is a divine meaning in

their lives and a purpose which they may fulfil. This is not a cause of pride, it is an awful sense of responsibility, of divine compulsion. Men may shrink from it as Isaiah did when he cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," or as Jeremiah said when he heard God saying to him, "I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations,"—"Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child."

Now it is evident to anyone who reads the Gospels simply that Jesus had this feeling of a divine call in a supreme degree. It is evident also that there were times when he shrank from it. That is the meaning of the temptation in the wilderness. Told in symbolic language to the disciples, he is expressing the fear that came to him in committing himself absolutely to the call of God, and the temptation to use his power for self-protection or self-advantage or self-advertisement. The claims that Jesus makes to be called by God for a special work do not imply that he thought himself more than man. They are expressed in the language of his age, "Son of Man," "Son of God," "Messiah," but the underlying meaning is simply that he felt himself called to proclaim the Good News of the Rule of God and to guide men's feet into the way of Peace.

What we think about Jesus depends, not on what we think of the titles which he used of himself, or which were ascribed to him, but on what we think of the claim that he was really sent by God for a special work, and of the life and teaching which resulted from that inner consciousness of a divine call. There is nothing in the Unitarian belief in the pure humanity of Jesus to prevent us from believing that he was right in feeling his

divine mission. We may think of him as he thought of himself, as a divinely appointed Teacher, and we may think of him as he did not think of himself—as no saint ever thought of himself—as an Ideal of self-sacrifice, love, devotion and courage, making us realize what it is possible for a man to be, what it is possible for a man to do.

We are often told by orthodox writers, and some unorthodox writers too, that if we cut out the miracles and the claims to Messiahship which describe the final Judgment over which Jesus himself was to preside, we are left with very little and have destroyed the essential meaning of the story. There is much exaggeration in such statements. The great words of Jesus and the impress of his personality remain. It is true, of course, that the early Church thought of Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead, and that for St. Paul the death of Jesus had a significance more important than anything in his life. These later conceptions very naturally coloured the account of the life and teaching of Jesus given in the Gospels. The marvel is, not that they are there, seeing that these Gospels were written by men whose minds were saturated with Eschatological and Messianic conceptions, but that they have given us so much of the teaching of Jesus which is quite unconnected with their own views of his person and significance.

Dr. Bernard Bosanquet, in writing of popular perversions of Rousseau's teaching, makes some reflections which bear on the problem of the later elements in the Gospel story of Jesus.[1] "The popular rendering," he says, "of a great man's views is singularly liable to run straight into the

[1] *Philosophical Theory of the State*, p. 14.

pitfalls against which he more particularly warned the world. This could be proved true in an extraordinary degree of such men as Plato and Spinoza, and still more astonishingly, perhaps, of the founder of the Christian Religion. The reason is obvious. A great man works with the ideas of his age and regenerates them. But in as far as he regenerates them he gets beyond the ordinary mind, while in as far as he operates with them he remains accessible to it. And his own mind has its ordinary side; the regeneration of ideas which he is able to effect is not complete and the notions of the day not only limit his entire range of achievement but float out unassimilated within his living stream of thought. Now all this ordinary side of his mind will partake of the strength and splendour of his whole nature. And thus he will seem to have preached the very superstition which he combated. For in part he has done so, being himself infected; in part the overwhelming bias of his interpreters has reversed the meaning of his very warnings by transferring the importance, due to his central thought, to some detail or metaphor which belongs to the lower level of his mind. It is an old story how Spinoza, the God-intoxicated man, was held to be an atheist."

Jesus himself believed that he was sent by God, that he was divinely inspired and guided, that he had a work to do, and no doubt used the language and symbols of his age in describing his mission. He was misunderstood, as all the greatest men are misunderstood, and it is possible, as Dr. Bosanquet suggests, that his own mistakes, or what he had in common with his age, were glorified, while the most profound truths and visions which were entirely his own were ignored. The Christology of the early Churches and of St. Paul makes little

of his life and teaching in their theories of his work. All we can say about them is, that there lies behind them the impression of a powerful, awe-inspiring, thrilling personality, which we find for ourselves in the Synoptic Gospels when freed from the legends and theories of the writers who composed them. These legends and theories themselves are not mere perversions or hindrances to truth. They have a symbolic meaning not realized by the writers themselves. They are the product of the life and teaching of Jesus on the imaginations and thoughts of men who loved him or who had at least felt the power of his personality. We need not cast them out as wholly irrelevant or absurd. The spirit of Jesus is in them; the impression of his life and love. They are his creation in the minds of his disciples and bear witness to the effect that he produced. But the all-important things are his life and teaching.

There is a striking passage in the *Völkerpsychologie* of the great philosopher Wundt, quoted by Dr. Claude Montefiore in his Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels. "No unprejudiced person who is only tolerably familiar with the ways in which myths are formed, and who has also fairly followed the growing discovery and elucidation of the source of old Oriental legends, can to-day any longer doubt that with the exception of a few incidents in the narrative of the Passion which probably possess an adequate historic attestation, the outward life of Jesus is a tissue of legends. But that which these legends leave untouched and that which is *never found* [italics my own] in their mythological counterparts and predecessors, is the series of sayings and speeches of Jesus as they have been handed down to us in the Synoptic Gospels." Here we

feel we are in contact with an authentic voice from God, in contact with a revelation of the love of God and the divine meaning of human life.

We should recognize, of course, that some sayings ascribed to Jesus have been coloured by the beliefs of those who reported them, especially such sayings as those referring to his death on the cross and his resurrection. We should recognize that some authentic words are of less value than others and that some are expressed in Oriental imagery which needs interpretation and which cannot be taken literally. But the general impression of the teachings of Jesus, now and in all ages, is that of a man who "spake with authority," who is in contact with reality. We say with Simon Peter in St. John's Gospel, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

It is a foolish fashion to speak as if the ethical and religious teachings of Jesus were comparatively unimportant and as if their value depended entirely on orthodox theories about Jesus. These theories sometimes gave weight to his words which was needed by those who did not feel the weight of the words themselves. More often they have taken men's thoughts away from the teaching and have fixed them upon Christological or ecclesiastical controversy. "The real miracle," says Professor Burkitt, "which escapes our notice only because it is so familiar, is the irresistible vitality of the ethical teaching of Jesus." [1] It is the gospel *of* Jesus, not the gospel *about* Jesus, which is of supreme importance. This was felt, among the early Christians, more often than we realize. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus," says Clement of Rome in his First Epistle.

[1] *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, p. 27.

"I could wish," says Justin Martyr, "that all might be of the same mind with myself and no longer depart from the words of the Saviour; for they have in them something to inspire awe and put to shame those who stray from the right path, and to those who practise them they bring the sweetest peace. . . . Brief and concise words were his; for he was no sophist, but his word was the power of God." These are only two instances out of hundreds which might be given and which represent the effect of the teaching of Jesus and the impression made by his life.

Most striking and significant are the words of the writer of St. Matthew's Gospel at the close of the collection of sayings called the Sermon on the Mount. "And the multitude was astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." No miracles are recorded, no claim to Deity or even Messianic power is made; the effect of these sayings depended on their truth and on the personality—the human personality—behind them. Such sayings reveal us to ourselves: they fill us with awe and shame and still more with hope and trust. We feel in them the power of a man who was taught of God and who lived with God. It is the same with the great Parables and with many other isolated sayings, such as "He that would save his life shall lose it," or "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." There is a personal claim here, but it is not the claim of a God, but of a man who felt that there had been revealed to him the way of life.

The teaching of Jesus has been too much identified with the conception of the approaching end of the world. Very possibly Jesus shared in that belief which was so widely held among the

Jews. But the essence of that belief for him was the immediate necessity of repentance, the urgency of the good life and the tremendous hope in better things to be. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." All his greatest sayings in connection with the coming of God's Rule on earth and the need of repentance and the call to work in hope, apply to us just as much as they applied to those who expected the imminent end of the world. The catastrophe of death awaits us all. It comes as a thief in the night, it comes as the bridegroom comes while we are sleeping; our life is frail and uncertain. The end may come for us on earth at any moment. "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." The worth of the Gospel of Jesus does not depend on the belief in the end of the world. If it had depended on this, it would have perished as soon as it became evident in the second century A.D. that the belief was not true. It does not depend on the doctrine that Jesus will preside over the final Judgment whenever it occurs, or that he was the second person in the Trinity. It depends on its intrinsic truth, on its appeal to the highest in us, and on the personality of Jesus; his life and his teaching were one. The teaching does not stand alone. It is a revelation, not only of the will and character of God, but a revelation of the personality of Jesus. We feel in him, as all Christian ages have felt, an ideal to be followed, a teacher to be trusted, a friend to be loved. As Miss Dougall says in her *Lord of Thought*, "The peculiar genius which belongs to great moral or religious teachers is always coupled with a life lived in the power of the teaching. It could not be otherwise. Morality or religion can

only be fully taught by being exemplified in life; and no teacher could be great who was not so possessed with his message as to live in its power."

To reverence the teachings of Jesus, then, is also to feel his own personal power and to look up to him and feel ourselves his disciples. If his teachings are of supreme value, he himself as a man is of supreme value to us also. His life is an ideal for us of inward peace and purity and strength, of faith in God and love to man. It was the thought of that life of Jesus on earth which inspired the greatest passage in the writings of St. Paul, his Hymn on human love in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians. There, in that Hymn, St. Paul rises above all theories about Christ and sees into the spirit of the life of Jesus upon earth. "Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." In those words the spirit and meaning of the life and teaching of Jesus are expressed. His death was in accordance with his life, but his complete humanity is even more strikingly evident in his death than in his life.

What prayer could more truly represent men at their best, desiring to live and yet ready to die, than the words, "Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." Those are not the words of a divine Being who knows himself ordained by God to die for men. They are the words of a man who shrinks from death but who commits himself fearlessly to God's will, whatever

it may be. The words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," are words of human insight and tenderness which come from that which is deepest and noblest in man. And the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" reveal the extremity of agony in which, for a moment before the final peace and victory, Jesus lost the feeling of God's love. We bow our heads in reverence before the crucified Jesus, and we feel in him the representative of the best and noblest men and women of all ages. It is the most splendid tragedy in history, and like all great tragedy it does not depress or frighten. It vindicates the eternal reality and supremacy of love. The belief in the Resurrection is essentially the faith that such human love, such human greatness, are not destroyed by death, but that they are raised to greater power through death, that they are alive with a new, divine life, and are with us always, even unto the end of the world.

One further question demands consideration. What have Unitarians to say about the "Eternal Christ," the Christ who for many Christians seems almost to take the place of God? Professor Percy Gardner, in his book on *The Practical Basis of Christian Belief*, has the following words: "Many earnest Christians have a strong dislike to Unitarian teaching; and their instinct is right, though it usually hides much confusion of thought. In a sense every Christian is a Unitarian. None of the early disciples would have hesitated to repeat the creed of Israel, 'God is one.' And the Nicene Creed is quite as explicit, 'I believe in one God—and in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.' 'But,' most churchmen would say, 'we believe also in the divinity of Jesus

Christ.' The difference between the really Unitarian religions, Judaism and Islam, and Christianity, lies in this, that the latter in addition to the doctrine of the divine unity preaches also the doctrine of the Incarnation. To me the whole question of Christology presents itself partly as one of fact and experience and partly as one of theory or the explanation of fact. The facts are these: (1) the life and personality of Jesus Christ, which is a historic question and can only be approached by historic methods; (2) the growth and inspiration of the early Church, which also we have to study in historic documents; (3) the present relation of the Spirit of Christ to Christians, which is a matter of observation and experience."

So far as I understand Professor Gardner, he seems to mean that the historic Jesus may be entirely human, and yet the Eternal Christ, the Christ of experience may remain in unchanging power and splendour, as the unique Incarnation of God and a perpetual divine presence in our life. Unitarian Christians in this discussion are closer to the genuinely orthodox than they are to Modernists like Professor Gardner. It is the historic Jesus, his teaching, his personality, his inspiration, with whch we are concerned. For the genuinely orthodox the historic Jesus is the second Person in the Trinity. He was miraculously born and miraculously raised from the dead, he was the Incarnation of God, he was the divinely predicted Messiah of the Prophets, he was the Logos or eternal Reason of God revealed in the flesh, who died upon the Cross for human sin and who will return sometime upon the clouds of heaven in glory. Meanwhile, as he said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." The orthodox Christian finds it very difficult to

divide between the living Christ, the Christ of experience, and the Holy Spirit, but for him there is no distinction between the Christ of experience and Jesus of Nazareth. The living Christ is the Jesus of Nazareth who humbled himself and took upon himself the form and characteristics of a man. Jesus was all the time essentially the second Person in the Trinity. The historic Jesus and the Eternal Christ are identical, and our knowledge of the Eternal Christ depends on our knowledge of the historic Jesus. If you prove that the historic Jesus was a man, wholly human, you destroy the orthodox conception of the Eternal Christ. We may be left with the experience, but we should have to find another name and another explanation for it. Unitarians for the most part would agree with that position. What Jesus means to us to-day depends on what we think of Jesus of Nazareth. If we feel any communion with a living Christ it must be through our reverence and love for the Jesus of history. Such a communion is by no means impossible or unjustifiable, but if we are to give it the name of communion with Christ it must be integrally related with the historic Jesus.

Now for Professor Gardner and similar Modernists there seems to be almost a gulf between the historic Jesus and the living Christ. They give up Jesus to the critical historian to do his best or his worst. The miraculous birth and resurrection do not matter. Miracles in general do not matter. The question whether Jesus regarded himself as Messiah does not matter. The eschatological mistakes of Jesus do not matter. The all-important thing is that we should keep our living Christ. It is quite evident that by their expression of the Eternal Christ they mean to express something of profound religious value. No

religious man would say that it was a mere psychological expression without any basis in reality. It is a form of communion with the Eternal: it means a sense of divine leading and divine comfort. It means a call to self-sacrifice and a feeling of the sacred meaning of pain and sorrow. It has in it a sense of human companionship, a feeling of the unreality of death and the unimportance of time, and the nearness of the unseen spirit-world to us in our earthly life. These and such as these are great life-giving experiences, and the important thing is to have them rather than to dispute about their name. Religious men and women, whether Unitarian or Trinitarian, have such experiences, and it is a serious mistake of Evangelicals to imagine that Unitarians are without that unseen companionship and that communion with eternal Love, because they do not call it by the name of the Eternal Christ. After all, God surely means something to us and is not wholly swallowed up in Jesus Christ. The experiences which many Modernists call communion with the living Christ would be described by many Unitarians who have similar experiences as communion with the living God. We should not deny the possibility of a sense of communion and fellowship with Jesus of Nazareth. Reverence for his teaching and personality, recognition of the will and love of God revealed through him, need not be only a grateful historic memory. There may be a feeling of communion with him still and a sense of support in his unseen companionship. Some Unitarians feel this more than others, but few if any Unitarians would make the Eternal Christ a substitute for the living God.

The late Dean Rashdall has very wisely said that "it is to be remembered that Christian experience is largely affected by religious belief."

This means that the experience may be real, but the form in which we express the experience to ourselves or others will depend much on beliefs or presuppositions which may be wholly or partly mistaken. If Jesus of Nazareth was entirely human when he taught and lived on earth, then after death he cannot have become the Eternal Christ in the sense in which many Modernists use the phrase. Their belief in an Eternal Christ is only justified if Jesus of Nazareth was all that orthodox Evangelicalism claims. To deny the latter as Modernists do and to attempt to keep the former is a hopeless task. It is Pauline phraseology without Paul's absolute identification of his living Christ, the Saviour of the world, with the historic Jesus. For us the phraseology seems misleading and unsuitable even though we regard Jesus as the greatest of men and the most divinely inspired of teachers. We have the same experiences but we describe them differently. The great words of Jesus are not the far-off sayings of a dead teacher, but revelations of a living personality to whom our hearts respond. We need not think of Jesus as dead and gone and buried in a book because he was certainly human. But we do not find our whole religious experience in such communion with Jesus. It is his Father and our Father, his God and our God, who is the supreme living reality in our lives. Whatever we may think about the historic Jesus, the divine companionship with the Eternal Spirit of Love, which spoke through him, remains to us. That experience is not dependent on this or that view of history. It is to be found in all great religions. It is the experience of the soul in direct relationship to God. It is

> "The fountain light of all our day,
> The master light of all our seeing."

VIII

THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION IN NEW ENGLAND

By William Wallace Fenn.

The Rev. Professor W. W. Fenn was born in 1862, and was educated at Harvard University, where he graduated A.B. (1884) and A.M. and Th.B. (1887). Subsequently he received the Degree of D.D. Harvard, 1898. He entered the Unitarian Ministry in 1887, serving as Minister at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and then for ten years as minister of the First Unitarian Society, Chicago. Since 1901 he has held the office of Bussey Professor of Systematic Theology in Harvard Divinity School, where he also served as Dean from 1906 to 1922.

THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

Let us imagine two men of the same daily occupation, living in the same neighbourhood, and moving with their families in the same social circle. They read the same books and newspapers, appreciate the same works of art and are pleased by the same music. They are on the same footing socially, economically, and intellectually, and stand on the same level of culture. The main difference between them is that one professes and calls himself a Christian while the other does not. Would this professed difference show itself in any difference of outward behaviour, or if not so openly, then in any difference in their outlook upon life and general attitude towards its ups and downs? To borrow the Pragmatist's question —What difference does it make that one man is a Christian while the other is not? Would an observer, knowing only so much about them as has been stated, be able to make out which was which? Of course, it may be said that quite apart from formal professions, both men are Christians, in a general sense of the term, since each, let us suppose, has been baptized, and certainly both pass their lives in conditions largely determined by Christian influences: all that may be freely granted without affecting our present inquiry. One man has openly and deliberately taken to himself the name Christian in a way that the other has not; he is more closely identified with the Christian community and is more intimately affected by its deeper currents of thought

and feeling. So, our question is, What difference does this make between him and his neighbour?

It is undoubtedly true that there have been long periods in the history of Christianity when this question could not have arisen, certainly not in precisely this form. In an age when all were called Christians and constituted such by baptism, the difference was between Christians good or bad, nominal or real; but in an earlier age when Jewish or Gentile Christians were surrounded by a non-Christian Jewish or Pagan population, the question had the same point that it now has in the Protestant world. We may ask how a Christian Jew in Jerusalem, at about A.D. 50, could be distinguished from his fellow-Jew who was not a Christian, or how a Gentile Christian in Corinth or Iconium, say ten years later, differed from his unconverted neighbour, and these questions we can indeed answer with some accuracy and assurance, but as time goes on the reply becomes at once more vague and less confident on account of insufficient evidence. For we have in mind, not Christian leaders, but the average Christian man who wrote no books, played no important part in civil or ecclesiastical affairs, formulated no dogmas, probably wrote no letters, or at least none that have been preserved —a decidedly obscure and inarticulate person, this commonplace Christian believer, yet we are immensely interested in him, for it was men of his kind that made up the Christian Church, and the Christian influence passed through him to us by a succession rather more significant than the apostolic. Unhappily, however, our interest and curiosity have not been shared by scholars of competent learning and insight. The history of the Christian Church, both externally

as an institution and inwardly as the home of developing doctrine and ritual, has been often written with ample knowledge and critical discrimination, but the history of the Christian ideal and the Christian actual as cherished in the former case and exhibited in the latter by the ordinary Christian man has been strangely overlooked; yet we are heavily in his debt and would fain know better what manner of man he was. This is the large inquiry, of signal importance now in Protestant home-lands and even more in foreign mission fields, to which some slight contribution will be made by describing what has been called the Christian way of life as represented in the religious history of New England.

In some respects the narrow field selected is peculiarly favourable for such an investigation. For during the first hundred and seventy-five years, that is until about the beginning of the last century, the population of New England was exceptionally homogeneous. Nearly all were of middle-class English stock, and there were no sharply drawn social distinctions, since there was neither a titled nor a moneyed class. As labour had not yet become organized for mass production, the employers and the employed did not divide the community: none were very rich, none were very poor. In those days of home industries, when practically everything needed for the subsistence of a family could be raised on a man's own farm, before railroads had been built and distant markets opened, there were no large fortunes, save in a few conspicuous instances in sea-board towns. Wealth was disguised instead of being flaunted as it now is. An American literary critic who waxed merry over Whittier's simple-minded "innocence" in supposing it pos-

sible that a judge should marry Maud Muller, whose grace as she raked the hay had caught his favouring eye, did not know the New England countryside of a century, or even a half-century ago, and John Greenleaf Whittier did. There was many a judge on the bench, many an honourable member of a State legislature or the National Congress, whose wife had often helped with her own hands in haying time, when a line of mist was edging down the western slopes and thunder was grumbling around the circle of the hills.

Not only were racial distinctions absent and social discriminations unacknowledged, but also all the inhabitants shared the same religious inheritance. Not that all belonged to the Church : from the beginning, Church members formed only a very small part of the population, probably not more than one out of four or five, yet it must by no means be inferred that the rest were indifferent to religion. In the collections of theological books belonging to Harvard College and to the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, there are hundreds which contain the autographs of previous owners, and it is striking to observe how many were once the property of laymen, books too of the driest and grittiest character, which to-day, unless for their associations, not one layman in a thousand would keep on his shelves, much less read. There was a great deal of theological reading and reflection, and the sermons of the village minister, which Oliver Wendell Holmes once likened to Passover bread, holy but heavy, were attentively heard and faithfully discussed. Here were men and women, then, of the same racial stock and religious inheritance, singularly alike in social, economic, and intellectual status, yet some of whom avowed themselves Christians,

while others, often from modesty or self-depreciation, made no such profession. What actual difference was there between the two classes? That is our question.

During the first sixty years, that is from 1630 to 1690, the colonial period, there was probably no appreciable difference whatsoever. It has been said that every ship which came to New England up to 1645 carried one passenger whose name never appeared on the rolls but who ruled every soul on board with a rod of iron, and his name was John Calvin. That is a picturesque way of saying that all the first colonists were Calvinists. Not that all sought the "howling wilderness"—as they loved to call it in their moods of self-pity or in petitions and protests to the mother-country—from religious motives exclusively or even chiefly. Some were led by hope of bettering their condition, others by love of adventure, the lure of the long trail, and doubtless in many cases, perhaps in most, there was a tangle of motives the strands of which are hard to disentangle and estimate at their proper values. Nevertheless, nearly all were Calvinists. Just as to-day, when the Fundamentalists are fighting "the battles of the Lord," there are multitudes who sympathize with them although they are connected with no Church and do not even call themselves Christians, so it is fair to say of the first settlers that all had Calvinistic prejudices and presuppositions. Yet they were Englishmen before they were Calvinists, and Christian Englishmen too. That means that they possessed certain racial and acquired customs which were far more deeply ingrained than their Calvinism. As a class, they were stout-hearted, truth-speaking men, loyal to conscience as they apprehended it, tenacious of order and intolerant

of nonsense, zealous for the purity of the family, honouring law, reverencing God, his Word and his day. That is, they had a set of excellent moral habits which were vested with divine sanction by the Bible Calvinistically interpreted, and enforced with unsparing rigour by Calvinistic magistrates and a stern public sentiment. It is true that they were flinty and sharp-edged, prone to take life rather austerely and grimly, whence it is that the word Puritan has now become what Martineau once called a "vehicle of excited feeling" against whatever or whoever is staunch, serious, and law-abiding; but it were well for those who speak thus cavalierly to reflect that we do live in a world where laws are inexorable, and that human life is not a musical comedy, but still to every thoughtful mind carries the dignity of tragedy. Those first colonists were by no means lank-haired, sour-visaged men, all compact of holy groans and pious snuffles, but they were thoughtful, and the circumstances in which their lot was cast kept them ever mindful of the seriousness of man's life upon the earth. This was true of almost all of them, hence, so far as outward conduct went, there was little difference between a Church member, a regenerate man, a Christian, and his neighbour who was none of these things. Nor was there any perceptible difference as respects formal religious practices: all went to church, were compelled to by law; all read and believed the Bible, kept the Sabbath, and were obedient to the laws of God and the Commonwealth. Family prayers were generally maintained, as well as grace at meat.

Nevertheless, if there was no visible difference between the two classes, they were not identical. Hermas, in the third and fourth Similitudes of

the Shepherd, is shown many trees, dry and leafless, among which he is unable to discriminate, and is told that these represent the righteous and the sinners who cannot be distinguished in this wintry world, but shall be recognized for what they are in the world to come. Similarly in bleak New England the two classes were indistinguishable, but the one was destined for heaven while the other was doomed to hell. Let us be perfectly clear about this. Of the two neighbours whom we described, the one had experienced a work of grace in his heart which constituted him a Christian in the specific sense of the term, credible evidence of which was required for Church membership, while the other had not. What difference did it make between them? Was the former a better man, more friendly and public-spirited, a more kind and faithful husband, a more affectionate father, a more obliging and serviceable neighbour? I am not aware that such was, or was expected to be the case. Yet, although the two men might be of exactly equal worth in all the relations of life and in all the outward observance of religion, in God's sight one was a potential saint in light while the other was a smouldering firebrand of hell. And why? Simply because one was regenerate, while the other was not. Regeneration, then, made an immeasurable difference between men, which, however, might be evident to God alone. Thus, over a life of moral habits, however excellent, moves an undefined ideal of a life well pleasing to God which the regenerate alone could lead.

Not only was it undefined, it was also held to be unattainable by merely human effort. It was hopeless for man to rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows so that he might attain unto a life acceptable in the sight of God. All

his efforts must necessarily prove futile, since God alone, through his regenerating power, could enable one to realize this Christian ideal. There are few things more perilous, morally and spiritually, than to believe thus in an undefined and unattainable ideal, the realization of which depends wholly upon arbitrary supernatural help, although the most direful consequences wait upon its nonfulfilment. Ideals are like Bunyan's apples of Eve, seen in the House Beautiful, whereof Christian was unable to tell whether they were food or poison. They are never so likely to prove the latter as when they are not organic with life, springing out of it, and reacting upon it with quickening and purifying power. Such a dislocation between the ideal and the actual is always fraught with peril, and so the New England men found it, as we shall presently observe.

May it not be, however, that the case has been put somewhat too strongly, and that although there was no visible difference between saint and sinner, the former was supposed to have certain inner experiences due to the operation of God's Spirit which therefore an unregenerate man could not enjoy—warm and pious frames, rapt elevations of thought and feeling, a keener sense of God's hand in the various events of life? There is some reason to believe that this was supposed to be the case. For instance, the Rev. Samuel Newman of Rehoboth, in Massachusetts, compiler of a Concordance to the Bible, left among his papers a set of Rules or Tests, thirteen in number, by which he sought to read his title clear to mansions in the skies. Of these thirteen tests, only two even suggest any reference to conduct, while all the others have to do with states of thought and feeling.

Those two were a desire to requite evil with good

(which indeed might be only a desire) and a choosing of suffering rather than sin (which, again, might not be an effective choice). Yet, it must be added that comparatively little is said about such inner spiritual experiences in the sermons of the period. Perhaps this was in part due to the reluctance of these men, just because they were Englishmen, to talk about such things, but it may quite as well be because, for the same reason, they did not have them to talk about. At any rate, reports of such emotional experiences produced little impression upon them, as when the redoubtable Captain Underhill professed that the Spirit of God fell mightily upon him while he was taking a pipe of tobacco, and they smelt brimstone in the incense of the sanctuary. In any event, such a difference was not at all in outward conduct, but solely in inward feeling, which at best is still not organic with the rest of life.

With the dying off of the first settlers, the fathers of New England, changes began to appear both in moral habits and in religious belief. As regards the latter, their Calvinism softened, and, in particular, one of its cardinal doctrines, that of regeneration, slipped into the background of their minds. Calvinism was a form of Christianity peculiarly appropriate to these early conditions, when literally and beyond all question the colonists were dependent upon God not only for their well-being but also for their very being. Before them stretched the unbounded and unexplored forest, and through its leafy screen savage beasts and still more savage men peered evilly upon them. To the north were the French, hostile to them both as Englishmen and as Protestants. Much farther to the south, yet not wholly beyond striking distance, were Spaniards, and to both

French and Spanish fleets the New England coast lay open. Behind them rolled the ocean, cutting them off from home and human help. Upon whom could they depend but upon God? Nor must we forget their great enemy Satan, whom they did not forget even for a minute. One theory was that at the time of the Protestant Reformation the devil dethroned in Europe had fled to the unchristianized New World, where he had found in the American Indians a people peculiarly to his liking and apt to do his bidding. Just as he had become well established in his new domain, the Puritans and Pilgrims, representing the purest form of Christianity then in the world, had come over to dispute his sovereignty. Of course, Satan would do his utmost to destroy these invaders of his peculiar realm by arousing his savage subjects against them, and by bringing under his sway pliable men and women who, as witches, could do their fellow countrymen incalculable harm. Like most seventeenth-century Christians, the settlers believed in hosts of invisible evil spirits filling the air, in the devil, their great Napoleon, and in witches and compacts with Satan. Sometimes, too, these witches were spirited away into the depths of the forest for nocturnal meetings which, as some of the apostate visitors confessed, were organized after the pattern of Congregational churches,[1] so closely did the diabolical ape the divine.

All this the settlers devoutly believed, but they also believed that they were in the mighty hand

[1] "The witches do say that they form themselves much after the manner of Congregational churches, and that they have a baptism and a supper and officers among them abominably resembling those of our Lord."—Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*, ed. 1862, p. 160.

of God, because they were in New England not of their own will alone, but in obedience to his command. He had brought them across the ocean, miraculously preserved them from its perils, and established them upon inhospitable shores for the furtherance of his purpose, which might even be to set up the New Jerusalem in those uttermost parts of the world. They stood in the power of God, these first settlers, and he, whose might was over all, would never leave them nor forsake them, so long as they remained faithful to him and obedient to his will. Upon him, then, they were ultimately and utterly dependent. That was their Calvinism. But as time went on, the forests were cleared and their savage inhabitants subdued; the colonists became less manifestly dependent upon God; they had proved their strength, and feelings of self-reliance grew. So, in general, their Calvinism weakened.

In particular, their faith in regeneration, and consequently in whatever was supposed to be peculiar to the regenerate, also waned. The beginnings of this change appear in the "Anne Hutchinson troubles," over which we must linger for a moment, both because of the bearing of the controversy upon what has already been said, and also because of the light it throws upon subsequent history. Two points were especially under discussion. One was the assertion that "sanctification" is no evidence of "justification." Put in plain English, this meant that one might be a very saint in outward behaviour and even, it would seem, in inward disposition, and still lie under the curse of God. That is precisely what their own theory implied, as has already been stated. True, but these settlers were Englishmen and therefore were not at all disposed to

let their logic sweep them over Niagara. They could not work with the idea that a man might be irreproachable in the sight of men and still be an object of God's wrath and hate; particularly when soldiers refused to serve in an Indian expedition under the leadership of a good commander whom they suspected of being under a "covenant of works." So, when they banished Anne Hutchinson, their practice belied their avowed theory. Should that practice persist, the theory which it implied must ultimately demand explicit recognition; and, as we shall see, that was what actually happened.

A second point at issue was Anne Hutchinson's claim to be the recipient of private revelations. This also was intolerable, not only because Münster was to the men of the early seventeenth century what Bolshevism is to their descendants of the early twentieth, but also because those colonists were bent upon establishing in the New World a Church and a State after the pattern laid down in God's revealed Word, and understood perfectly that any recognition of private or personal revelations might easily subvert the very foundation of the structures they were rearing with so much labour and at such great sacrifice. Yet, to condemn Anne Hutchinson and so deny the possibility of any direct divine action upon the mind of man in "revelation" was to go a long way towards denying a similarly immediate working of the Spirit upon the soul of man in "regeneration." Thus it came about, before the century ended, that belief in regeneration and in the ideal of the regenerate life had almost passed out of their active thinking. There is a noteworthy passage in a letter written by Cotton Mather to Major Richards, an influential member

of his church, who was strongly opposed to the "Half-way Covenant" which Mather approved.[1] In this letter, under date December 14, 1692, Mather states his purpose to admit to baptism "such as were instructed and orthodox in the Christian religion, and should bring testimony signed by more than one among the people of God that they are of a virtuous conversation, and should, after their names have been publicly propounded (and objection cannot be made against them), openly and seriously give themselves up to God in Christ, according to the terms of the Covenant of Grace, with a declaration of their study to prepare themselves further for the table of the Lord." Then Mather goes on to say: "I do most fully agree with you that no unregenerate person is to be baptized. But then I also think that a person so qualified as has been described, and one so sensibly submitting to the laws of our Lord, should not be pronounced unregenerate."

In every way this is a most illuminating letter. It shows how completely the New England men had lost sight of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, since it admits as beyond question that no unregenerate person is to be baptized. It draws the distinction, momentous to the New England Fathers, between Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and acknowledges the more advanced qualifications required for the latter. But our present interest lies in the test it proposes by which a man may be declared regenerate, and in the almost unconscious assumption that a man may "study to prepare himself for the table of the Lord," for which regeneration was theoretically indispensable. It is plain that thought has moved

[1] *The Mather Papers*, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Ser. IV, vol. viii. p. 397.

a long way from the position of the first settlers; or shall we say that practice has gone far beyond the earlier theory still formally maintained? As so often happens, conduct dictated by circumstances had outrun theory, and instead of theory moulding practice, practice was imperceptibly shaping theory to conform with it. This indeed seems to be the characteristically English method of progress. The point is that by this time regeneration had become one of the vanishing things, and the virtues attributed exclusively to the regenerate were likewise passing out of mind. Accordingly, the ancient ideal of a life well-pleasing to God, superior to the life of moral habits, that undefined and unattainable ideal of which we spoke as dependent upon regeneration alone, had become obsolete. Its place was taken by a quite different ideal, namely, that of the virtues of the Fathers of New England. How this came to pass will appear from a brief consideration of changes in the moral situation.

As the thin line of settlers pushed back from the sea-coast into the country, impelled not by religious motives either in whole or in part, but solely by economic ambition, moral customs began to deteriorate to familiar frontier standards. From complaints in the sermons of the time, and especially from the Findings of the Reforming Synod held in Boston in 1679–80, one might infer that there had been in New England a belated appearance of the moral conditions existing here after the Restoration. That, however, would be a false inference. Jeremiads of the sanctuary cannot always be taken as accurate representations of existing conditions. Again, the situation in New England at the time of the Reforming Synod was unhappy. There had been shipwrecks

and other grievous calamities; in Boston there had been pestilence and devastating fires; the Indians were again on the war-path harassing the frontiers, and many lives had been lost in unsuccessful expeditions against them and their French instigators. To crown all, relations with the mother country had become increasingly tense, and the loss of the Charter, with its probable effect upon property rights, was imminent. These disasters and menaces were interpreted not as misfortunes but as visitations. God was displeased with New England and was leaving it to its foes. Accordingly, the one and only security lay in returning to him with confession, repentance and a renewal of the ancient Covenant.

Cotton Mather himself gives unmistakable indication of the real situation. In his *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) he writes: "We are still so happy that I suppose there is no land in the universe more free from the debasing and debauching vices of ungodliness. The body of the people are hitherto so disposed that swearing, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, and the like do not make a gentleman, but a monster or a goblin, in the popular estimation. All this notwithstanding, we must humbly confess to our God that we are immeasurably degenerated from the first love of our predecessors. However, we boast ourselves a little when men go to trample upon us, and we venture to say, whereinsoever any is bold (we speak foolishly), we are bold also" (ed. of 1862, p. 11). To the same effect is another passage from the same author's *Ratio Disciplinæ* published in 1726: "Though the body of the people are a sober, honest, industrious and well-disposed sort of men . . . and the common people are better acquainted with religion than in any

other country on the face of the earth, yea, some whole towns have not so much as one family in them which does not maintain a religious worship of God our Saviour, or so much as one person that is known to walk disorderly; nevertheless there is found among them too much cause to complain of a growing apostasy from the religious disposition that signalized the first settlers" (p. 196).

From these two quotations one discerns the actual state of affairs. Moral habits had undoubtedly declined; not very seriously, yet to such an extent that the traditional virtues of the ancestors had taken the place of the undefined and unattainable ideal which the first settlers had cherished. So it was that the general religious situation had very decidedly altered. With the new emphasis upon man, indicated by the substitution of self-reliance for the sense of absolute dependence upon God, and reliance upon means of grace in contrast with the immediacy of grace in the work of regeneration, the Christian way of life was now conceived as a striving after the virtues of the first colonists, recognizable and attainable human virtues irradiated by pious feeling, enlightened by Christian doctrine, and aided by steadfast observance of the regularly appointed means of grace. Even in Cotton Mather, who is popularly and properly regarded as representing the clerical party, we find this very much attenuated and mitigated Calvinism. He would have indignantly resented any insinuation that he was no longer a Calvinist, and indeed could set forth the traditional doctrines with clearness and force upon occasion. Nevertheless it is to him that we owe a surprisingly broad and luminous statement which gives the view of his

generation at its best: "What is a Christian? A Christian is one who believes all that our glorious Lord Jesus Christ has revealed; a Christian is one who also obeys all that our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded." [1]

Such were New England conditions when Jonathan Edwards appeared upon the scene. Of the personality of this memorable man and the tragedy of his thought and life we cannot here speak, but only of his conception of the Christian way of life. It must be evident that the changes in religious thought had been in the general direction of Pelagianism or Arminianism, yet these heresies were scornfully repudiated. In his *Magnalia* of 1702 Mather quotes from Arrowsmith's *Anti-Weigelian Oration* a prayer that it may always be easier to find a wolf in England or a snake in Ireland than an Arminian or Socinian in Cambridge, and applies it to Harvard College. Some twenty-five years later he declared with triumph that no Arminian pastor could be found in all New England. Yet only about ten years afterwards, according to Edwards, "there began the great noise that was in this part of the country about Arminianism, which seemed to appear with a very threatening aspect upon the interest of religion here." [2] Plainly what had happened was that practice had suddenly risen into recognition as conscious theory. Against this Edwards set himself with the full energy of his masterful intellect, aiming to revive decadent Calvinism with its two cardinal doctrines of the absolute sovereignty of God and the equally absolute necessity of regeneration. His main line of attack was to deny unqualifiedly even the slightest moral

[1] Marvin, *Life and Times of Cotton Mather*, p. 386.
[2] *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, Works, III. p. 233.

ability on the part of man to contribute towards his own salvation, and so to rest everything upon the sovereign grace of God exercised only upon those whom from all eternity he had elected by his inscrutable will.

In addition, however, Edwards developed another and more positive line of thought which is of especial significance for our immediate purpose. It is unfortunate that Edwards is commonly known only as author of the *Treatise on the Freedom of the Will* (which has been grossly overpraised for its logical acumen) and as preacher of certain sermons which blaze and crackle with infernal flames. His pre-eminent contribution to religious thought is his *Essay on the Nature of True Virtue*. This particularly concerns us now. As against those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and relied upon their possession of the common human virtues to win favour with God, Edwards defined true virtue as consisting only in "love to Being generally considered." To such a definition there are many objections. The word "Being" is used in very much the same way as that in which some popular writers of the present day use the word "Life," as if it were somehow an independent and measurable entity, instead of an abstract term denoting an intricate complex of relations. Besides, Love is the most concrete of human feelings, and to direct it towards so abstract a conception as "Being in general" amounts almost to a contradiction in terms. In fact, Edwards himself usually puts it more definitely as Love to God, considered either as the source and sum of all Being, or as comprehending within himself the largest quantity of Being. Objections aside, however, our interest lies in the fact that Edwards has revived that

unattainable ideal which regard for the virtues of the ancestors had displaced; and, in addition, he has defined it in such a way as to shrivel into contemptible nothingness the "good works" upon which his Arminianizing contemporaries were relying as constituting a life acceptable to God. Let us put it in plainest terms. His thought is that no human action deserves to be called good, or virtuous, which is not animated by love to God. As the lover could not love his beloved so much, loved he not honour more; or as a man's love for his friend is wicked when it leads him to benefit his friend by putting him into a position where his incompetence works harm to other persons or to the State; so, according to Edwards, our loftiest virtues are nothing worth unless they are manifestations of an all-suffusing, all-controlling love of God! A man may love himself as part of universal Being; he may love his family and friends, his country, and even humanity as a whole, regarded as larger and larger quantities of Being; but these particular affections count for nothing in God's sight unless they are inspired and governed by love of the Most High, which in every experience of life shows its commanding presence: and such love is possible only to those who have been born again by God's special and saving grace. Before so sublime a conception of goodness as this, a seamless, shining robe of love, the "good works" upon which so many depended as the essence of a life well pleasing to God did indeed become but as the filthy rags of their own righteousness.

It is noteworthy that this ideal of the Christian life, in the form given it by Edwards, has to do, not with outward conduct, but with inward motives and states of feeling. It is sometimes said reproachfully that the New England Puritans set more

store by the Ten Commandments than the Beatitudes, and it is undoubtedly true that their holy Mount was the cloud-shrouded and tempest-swept peak of Sinai, rather than the Galilean hill where quiet words of grace fell gently from the lips of Christ. Yet Edwards knew right well that the Ten Commandments do not sufficiently set forth the whole duty of man, since they may be obeyed from motives such as Arthur Hugh Clough adduces in *The New Decalogue* instead of from loving reverence for them as divine behests. Hence, although he everywhere insists upon holy practice as the chief although by no means the infallible test of a Christian man, he also teaches that this must proceed from love to God. Thus he anticipates Schleiermacher by giving religion its home in the feelings, and more intimately in love to God flowing out into all human conduct. He freely admitted that, externally viewed, there might be not the least perceptible difference between the two men described at the beginning of this Essay, yet he contended that there must be a very real difference between them in the motive and spirit of behaviour. One lives to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever, the other lives from and for himself. Hence there is an immense difference in eternal destiny: the one is sealed for heaven, the other is on his way to hell.

Thus the ideal of the Christian life has received its definition, and a glorious definition it is. Yet it still remains beyond the reach of human effort and striving. Only after a new "taste" or "relish" has been imparted to man by the regenerating Spirit can he truly love God and begin to walk in the Christian way. But is it possible for a man to know for a certainty whether he does love God or not? There is a hymn which

used to be a favourite at neighbourhood meetings on the New England countryside, even within my recollection, one stanza of which runs thus :

> " 'Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought :
> Do I love the Lord, or no?
> Am I his or am I not? "

Upon the answer their eternal destiny depended, yet how could they tell? The doubt is perfectly reasonable; and the result of Edwards' noble definition was to plunge New England into a doleful period of religious introspection, one of the best illustrations of which is the *Journal* of David Brainerd. Good men and women carried about with them a clinical thermometer of the soul, and took their spiritual temperature many times a day, registering the readings in their Diaries or Journals, sometimes with glimmerings of hope, more often with black despair. Plainly, then, it was necessary to devise some test which would enable one to answer this momentous question. The need was met by Samuel Hopkins, who had studied theology in the family of Jonathan Edwards, and remained through life his devoted friend and loyal disciple.

The test, put in the form of a question, was simply this : Do you feel that you are willing to be damned for the glory of God? It is needless to spend any time over the history of the idea which the question implies. Ultimately it goes back to the plea of Moses—" Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written "; and to Paul's willingness to be accursed from Christ for the sake of those who were his brethren after the flesh. It is foreshadowed in some of the Christian

mystics, and in certain passages of disputed genuineness in the published sermons of early New England preachers. Edwards himself referred to it with respect, but not with approval. If it is worth while to hazard a conjecture as to the source from which Hopkins derived it, a plausible guess would be that it was from Mrs. Edwards, who herself had come upon it in the works of her distinguished great-grandfather, Thomas Hooker. Our interest, however, is in its meaning rather than its history; and its meaning has been widely misunderstood. It has sometimes been supposed to denote a willingness that, with respect to oneself, God's purpose should finally and for ever fail, and that one soul at least should continue in eternal rebellion against God. Manifestly, however, this is to put the idea in a totally different context from that to which it belongs. According to the revived Calvinism which both Edwards and Hopkins championed, the end of creation was to declare the glory of God. The glory of God is his character; hence to manifest his glory is to reveal his character. In his character are justice and hatred of sin, hence to declare his glory by the full exhibition of his character, there must be in the creation sin for him to hate, and hell to show how much he justly hates it. It follows, therefore, that there must be some sinful souls doomed to suffer in hell for ever, else the very purpose of the creation would be unfulfilled. That is, there are some fore-ordained to glorify God by their damnation, which reveals his just hatred of sin, precisely as there are others predestined to glorify him by showing forth his clemency and grace in their salvation and eternal blessedness. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and the question is this: Supposing that you are among those whom He has

chosen to glorify him by damnation, is that glory so altogether supreme in your eyes that you would welcome your predetermined reprobation because you thus set forth his glory? It is a terrible question, for in those days hell was hell, and its torments were eternal in duration and inconceivable in intensity.

Thus the Christian ideal has been defined again, along the same lines as before, but more closely and with a kind of infernal grandeur. It is still true that such an ideal is beyond mere human power unaided by supernatural grace. That fact of itself suggests the logical fault of the ideal as set forth in the appalling question which we have been considering, for since by no possibility can anyone feel himself willing to be damned for the glory of God unless he has been "born again," the instant he feels in himself that willingness he may be reasonably confident that he is not going to be damned at all. Yet here is certainly a conception of the Christian way of life which challenges awe and shuddering admiration. That man as a Christian should live to the glory of God has been a familiar thought since the days of Paul: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." That such a life carries with it self-sacrifice has also been familiar: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me: for whosoever would save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it." But this ideal outreaches even these thrilling words, whose meaning is not wholly beyond the limits of our experience:

> "Let goods and kindred go,
> This mortal life also:"

we can understand that, for we have known men and women willing to live in obscurity and poverty, and even to lay down their lives rather than sin against God and their own souls. Yes, we say, they indeed are true Christians, and sometimes we are wistful, wishing that we ourselves were worthy to be counted among them. Yet, sometimes, even they had respect unto the recompense of reward; is it not written even of Christ himself that he "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame"? Yet here were men reckoning the glory of God of such supreme concern that they were ready not only to suffer and die, but also to go to hell for ever for it. When a man has actually reached that point, nothing this life can bring has any power of temptation over him. He is above "the world's allurement, threat, and fashion," and has become morally and spiritually the Lord's free man. New England may well lift up her head in pride that she has bred men who were capable of this last renunciation, and I must add, New England may equally well bow her head in the dust that she has conceived of God so meanly as to deem him capable of requiring such a sacrifice—for his glory.

It must not be thought, however, that what has been said holds good of all the Churches in the ancient Congregational order of New England. The movement of thought and life which Edwards started influenced comparatively few of the Churches and ministers. The great majority of them kept on in the dull, plodding way of their mitigated Calvinism, languidly encouraging the commonplace virtues of conventional morality, with no glimpse of any Christian ideal surpassing them. The primitive ideal had been forgotten; the virtues of the fathers had lost power to arouse

or inspire; the pillar of fire by night was treated as a will o' the wisp, and the pillar of cloud by day was dubbed mysticism, "a horrid thing, sir, a very horrid thing," and the radiance of the Christian way of life had faded into the dull light of a leaden day. On the sea-coast, however, there were a few congregations whose Calvinism had been more deeply impaired, and who were so outraged by what they deemed the monstrous extravagances of Edwards and his followers, that in protest they were driven farther and more rapidly in the opposite direction, and were soon entirely and confessedly beyond Calvinism altogether. These Churches preferred to call themselves Liberal Christian, but soon had the name Unitarian put upon them by their theological adversaries. As these Churches conceived the Christian way of life it differed very little from that of mitigated Calvinism. Their religion was tranquil and thoughtful, their piety decorous and restrained. They were content to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk fairly humbly with their God. The cause of foreign missions found them cold, and when presented left them colder, for it appealed to a thought of God utterly repugnant to them. Domestic missions had no interest for them, until their own sons and daughters, moving into the newly-opened West, craved such religious privileges as they had enjoyed at home. In fact, they cared almost nothing about extending their influence, or getting others to believe as they did. Yet this was not due wholly to indifference. These New England Unitarians did believe sincerely in the dignity of human nature and the power of the truth, and were convinced that when freed from ignorance and superstition man would reveal a natural tendency towards God and his

Truth. Accordingly, they conceived it their mission to set men free, educate their intelligence, and leave the rest to themselves and to God. They advocated philanthropy and education instead of evangelization. This became their Christian way of life: to live according to reason and conscience, to cherish a tranquil and trustful faith in God, and to help their fellow-men in the most lofty and liberating way. Their chief defect was, as Emerson said, that they forgot that men are poets, and they themselves were a little afraid of poetry—excepting that of Alexander Pope. It was, however, mainly through Emerson that they, or their descendants, were lifted out of their rather prosaic piety, when, obedient to his summons, they were led from the pastures of placid and prosperous experience to the hills of God and the springs of the water of life.

The course of development in the other New England Churches was deeply affected by this movement. When the break came in the old Congregational order, the Churches which represented the traditional modified Calvinism, and those which stood by the teaching of Jonathan Edwards, combined against the Unitarians, and as a result of this formal union they mutually influenced each other. The excesses of the Edwards group were toned down and the apathy of the "mitigated Calvinists" was enlivened. In consequence, their thought of God almost imperceptibly changed. They had set up a magnificent moral ideal in the light of which every man stood condemned before God, but, judged by that same ideal, did not their God stand condemned before men? As the meaning of that question was more deeply felt, their thought of God changed to one in which love was supreme. They realized,

as their predecessors had not, that God can be loved only when he is conceived as supremely lovable. Their controversy with the Unitarians had turned their attention *to Christ*, with far-reaching results.

As we read the literature, if it can be called literature, of the earlier period, say up to the middle of the nineteenth century, we are impressed by the almost complete absence of any reference to the character of Christ. His name indeed everywhere appears, but the figure is that of the Pauline Christ instead of the historical Jesus. To the incidents of his earthly life, exemplifying his loving-kindness and tender mercy, there is hardly an allusion. Possibly it would have seemed to them irreverent, as it did to Newman, to dwell upon the patience and gentleness, the courage and sympathy of Jesus. What else could one expect of incarnate Deity? Christ was to them an official whose death was an essential factor in a scheme of salvation, but who was not himself conceived of as example and type of a saved man who for that very reason has saving power. This discovery seems to have been made first by the Unitarians; and Channing's exalted tribute to the character of Christ struck a note which has now swollen into a triumphant chorus. The person of Jesus has emerged from the glory-mists of tradition and over-passed the bounds of officialdom. In the light of his personality, men see the Christian way of life differently. What indeed can it be but the way Christ himself lived? What a simple observation! Or, rather, how simple men have been never to have made it before! He went about doing good, he loved his fellow-men and was ready to lay down his life for them. Can a man venture to call himself a

follower of Jesus, a Christian, if he is indifferent to the sufferings of others, if he is not doing everything in his power to relieve them? This view, be it noted, came almost simultaneously with revelations of human need due to social and economic evils, and the two combine to throw an altogether new emphasis upon the duty of the Christian with respect to social reform. The human Jesus became the inspiration to a humanitarian Christianity. Naturally, then, this brought the divided bodies Unitarian and Trinitarian into closer sympathy and co-operation.

The purpose of this Essay has been historical exposition, not comment or criticism; but now at the close I cannot refrain from a single observation upon the general subject, prompted by the present situation which has just been outlined. It is not peculiar to New England. It exists everywhere in the English-speaking world. Its leading characteristic is an interpretation of the Christian life in terms of social service, with Christ as the great exemplar to whom the sufferings of human kind made convincing appeal; and, therefore, it is urged, whoever would call himself Christian must be similarly sensible of human need and responsive to it. Mutual helpfulness is an imperative human obligation, recognized and enforced by the teaching of Jesus, that all men are members of the one family of God and brothers one of another; but to make Christianity coterminous with social service, and to define a Christian as one who feeds the hungry and clothes the naked, or (to speak more after the mode of scientific charity) who works in settlements and clubs, is active in social reforms and the like, is to lose sight of the deepest significance of Jesus himself, and to miss the very heart of Christianity. And

this, for the very simple reason that Christianity is a form of religion, and Jesus was first and foremost a deeply religious man. Now, religion is one of the most exquisite values of life; but it is neither the only nor an all-inclusive value, nor is it the one most important, perhaps, for social welfare; yet life would be sadly impoverished should it lose the precious quality which religion alone supplies, through a heedless sacrifice of its distinctive character in the supposed interests of a wider utility. Whether religion be defined as poetry believed in, or described as the music to which the work of life goes on, is immaterial, provided it be clearly seen that it possesses intrinsic value, in the sense that it is not a means to an end, even to so worthy an end as social service, or one so desirable as the soul's salvation, but is an end in itself, a savour of life lifting it above sordid routine, relieving its sorrows, hallowing its joys, and lightening its burdens by revealing the eternal meaning of our swiftly passing days.

A man may be an excellent public-spirited citizen and withal thoroughly upright and lovable —no better friend and neighbour than he in all the country round—and still not be religious; precisely as with all these splendid traits he may be without appreciation of literature, art or music. In the interests of religion and its distinctive contribution to the enrichment of human life, we need to see more clearly that the first service of Jesus to mankind lies in the fact that he taught and exemplified a singularly pure and lofty form of religion. It is written of him, indeed, that he went about doing good, but it is written again that he was in the habit of spending solitary hours in meditation and prayer. If we would follow him truly and fully, must it not be both in prayer

and in service, in thoughtful communion with God as well as in unsparing service of man? Primarily, he was not a social reformer but a genuinely and profoundly religous man, whose active helpfulness was only a part, although an inseparable part because the natural and inevitable expression, of his inner religious life. Should men ever lose interest in the incarnate God, the Messiah, the Saviour, and even cease to magnify the healing and helping friend of man, perhaps they would turn with all the more wonder and reverence to the lowly Galilean who spent his troubled days in the unfading radiance of a vision splendid, and trod the hard and cruel ways of common human life with God; think of it, *with God*. Christ was above all else a religious man; and the Christian way of life must ever lead upward in humble devotion to God, no less than outward in the sympathetic service of man.

IX

THE SPIRIT OF UNITARIAN PHILANTHROPY

By William George Tarrant.

The Rev. W. G. Tarrant was born in 1853, and was educated at Owens College, Manchester, University College, London, and Manchester New College, London. He has held the following appointments : Minister, Wandsworth Unitarian Church, London, 1883–1920; Editor of *The Inquirer*, 1887–97 and since 1918; member of the Executive Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association; lecturer and representative of the Association in Canada, the United States, South Africa, and at several European Congresses; Examiner and Visitor in the Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, and the Unitarian Home Missionary College. He has published hymns in various Hymnals (also " Bee Songs," 1901, and " Songs Devout," 1912), and several books and pamphlets on early Christianity and Modern Religion, including *The Story and Significance of the Unitarian Movement* (the Essex Hall Lecture, 1910) and *Unitarianism* (London, 1912).

THE SPIRIT OF UNITARIAN PHILANTHROPY

I. Principles.

An illuminating remark respecting Thomas Firmin (1632–1697), whose name stands first on the long roll of Unitarian citizen philanthropists, shows at a glance the essential aims and methods of Unitarian philanthropy as it has variously developed during the two centuries and a half since his day. His earliest biographer, a contemporary, tells us that his benevolent impulses were quickened by his religious teacher, the Rev. John Bidle (1616–1662), and this we might well expect. But it is evident that from the same clear-sighted guide Firmin received valuable directions as to the best way to render his charitable purposes fruitful and truly beneficial. Bidle, that intrepid pioneer of Christian thought, who was not to be deterred by threats, exile or imprisonment from declaring Gospel truth as he understood it, had clearly discerned the nature of the problem that confronts a would-be benefactor of mankind. And from him, we are told, Firmin "*learned to distrust mere almsgiving, but rather to make it his business to fathom the condition of the poor by personal investigation, and to reduce the causes of social distress by economic effort.*" [1]

Thus from their earliest generation Unitarians have felt the necessity of trying to use both head

[1] *Life of Thomas Firmin written by an Intimate Acquaintance*, 1698.

and heart in this business of helping mankind. William Rathbone Greg (1809–1881), one of their ablest writers in the nineteenth century, summed up in a memorable sentence in one of his brilliant and penetrative essays the case against that kind of philanthropy which, while undoubtedly warm-hearted, is not clear-headed enough to bring real and permanent benefit to those whom it desires to assist. Lamenting that "philanthropists generally" are so weak, even wanting in common-sense, Greg says: "Their views are often so injudicious, and their schemes so noxious, that a great portion of existing evils may be traced, either in their origin or their present aggravated form, to benevolent interferences for their removal; *and it may be said, with little exaggeration, that in this world a large part of the business of the wise is to counteract the efforts of the good.*" [1] How seriously the danger of doing positive harm by intended but injudicious kindness has weighed upon the best minds among us may be seen in the correspondence of James Martineau (1805–1900). Writing in the mid-century period when the political economists on the one hand, and the Christian Socialists with Kingsley at their head on the other, were discussing the problems of poverty, Martineau is found agreeing with R. H. Hutton that we should set up "at particular points a moral resistance to the full swing of economical laws." He says "the unchecked operation" of such laws, "in the absence of any religion to guide, console, and ennoble, crushes the mediocre and weak without reducing their relative numbers. It is useless to reproach them with their follies and incapacities. They will

[1] "Direction of Human Development," in *Enigmas of Life*, eighteenth edition, 1891, p. 159. (Italics ours.)

never themselves create the means of amendment or learn what, to others, would be the lessons of experience." They must therefore be "cared for," he maintains; but in another letter to the same correspondent (F. W. Newman) we find that the "care" which he has in view is very far from contenting itself with the immediate relief of bodily necessities. Admitting "the immense difficulty of attacking the evils of our large towns by a method of moral detail, rather than by the accumulated power of a mechanical organization," Martineau believes the principle of that method to be a sound one; "the reform which should set *all things right with one person* would surely be better than a reform which should set *one thing right with a hundred persons*" (italics his). Again we find the same writer replying to an inquiry by T. Elford Poynting (1813–1878) on the somewhat difficult question of providing oneself with comforts, or even luxuries as they may be deemed, while surrounded with "poor cottages and union workhouses." He thus reassures his correspondent: "Build a new room" (to the Parsonage) "as soon as you want it and can pay for it; get a Turkey carpet in the old one; and," he adds cheerily, "make your nest so snug that human life may go on within it without clashing against externals, or thinking of its own machinery. So far as the money question goes, I hold in the main by the doctrine of the Economists—that the least beneficent thing a man can do with his funds is to give them; and that every fraction of his income diverted from expenditure into charity is turned to inferior social account, for it is plainly better that the recipient should give labour for what he gets than give nothing." He proceeds to show by examples how the limita-

tion of one's purchases to "necessaries" only would inevitably reduce society to a "semi-barbarous life," in which the lowest wants of our nature would gain ascendancy and the better social powers and wants would be starved out. The moral limits of "luxury" are to be sought, he is persuaded, not in the obligations of *benevolence*, but in the operation of it upon *personal character*, and the tendency in every man to become a slave to customary indulgences. While in agreement so far with the Economists, however, he sees their fault to lie in "the erection of a general into a universal rule; if the average human conditions were all constant there would be no occasion to depart from their principle." But special crises occur, particular neighbourhoods suffer, and individuals in want are never absent from one's view; thus there is always room for "exceptional expenditure and self-denial" in everyone; but it is exceptional, and "if charity were to be the rule of expenditure, and the 'doing of good' to be the rule of human conduct, such an aim at Millennium would only ensure the end of the world. This," Martineau concludes, "simply brings us back to the old-fashioned doctrine of common-sense and Christian kindliness, that men should have something '*to spare*' for offices of humane fellow-feeling—an expression implying that the main engagement of their resources must be allowed to go in another direction."[1]

How far the writer of these remarks was from sharing in any cold-blooded "political economy" which has no pity for the victims of our social system is apparent as we read them; and if need

[1] Drummond and Upton, *Life and Letters of James Martineau*, vol. ii, pp. 296–298.

were, we might quote many a passage from his addresses in connection with Mission work among the poor, showing how deep was his sympathy with the distressed, and how strong his desire to help them in their need. But it was evidently the very urgency of this desire that impelled him, as so many others who shared his religious views, to take pains with their charity and not indulge in the facile expedient of salving surface ills while leaving untouched the deep-seated mischiefs whence they arise. He and his Unitarian contemporaries were assuredly no less benevolent in their purposes for keeping their heads cool; and John Lalor's *Money and Morals* (1852), a collection of essays dealing in a masterly way with such public questions as bore on the great debate to which we have alluded as current at that time, expressed their sentiments both eloquently and with precision. Mr. Lalor, the son of an Irish Catholic, found himself at home among the Unitarians at last, and was for several years the editor of *The Inquirer* newspaper, founded in 1842. His extraordinary grasp of principles, combined with an extensive knowledge of facts affecting social and national affairs, won for him the respect and confidence of a wide circle of trusting admirers, including (it is said) men in high office in the State. In particular, he was a keen critic of J. S. Mill's theories of capital and its production and circulation, but with such points we are not here concerned. What does interest us in our present study is to observe his trenchant exposure of the "dogma," as he calls it, of *laisser-faire*. This dogma, he says, "is simply a rash extension of a principle which, within its original limits, was sufficiently correct," the principle being that, among merchants, men are generally able to make better pecuniary bar-

gains for themselves than Government can make for them. But, says Lalor, the moment *laisser-faire* becomes a question concerning "something higher than making good bargains, every vestige of claim which the maxim might have to attention at once disappears. And this is true universally, not merely of the disputable, but of the most firmly established conclusions of political economy. There is not one of them that must not give way when it clashes with a moral principle, unless," he adds scornfully, "it be admitted that man's highest and only proper object is the pursuit of wealth." The passage in which this warm-hearted journalist sets forth the cruelties implicated in such an economic dogma is fired with a moral indignation of which the glow is unmistakable over all these years. The sum of the matter, as expressed by this journalistic voice of the Unitarians of that generation, is that, "in a Christian nation, Political Economy has no title whatever to assume the character of a legislator. It is her business to present such counsels and information as she can, concerning the production of wealth; but their value and application are to be determined upon principles of which she knows nothing." [1]

Turn where we will in the Unitarian records of that crucial period when, their hearts being newly awakened along with their contemporaries' to a sense of the sufferings of great masses of the population, men's minds were yet very hazy as to the right way, or ways, of coping with the evil, we find these two tones constantly recurring —pity and prudence; the need not only of the body to be fed, but of the soul to be quickened, before the problem of human society can be

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 135–7.

solved. As an outstanding instance of emphasis laid, as in Bidle's day, on the demand for the best intelligence and personal investigation and application as well as good intentions if Christian philanthropy is not to miss its mark, we may listen to the words of one who in his own generation admirably repeated Bidle's double work as a begetter of the philanthropic temper and a wise director of its practical efforts. John Hamilton Thom (1800–1894), to whose religious genius Dr. Martineau paid the profoundest tribute, dedicating to him the volume of his sermons, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, and who ranks in the forefront of spiritual preachers in that age, was singularly effective in rousing the spirit of a beneficence which was alike generous and far-sighted.

The city of Liverpool, where he was minister of one of the oldest Unitarian congregations, has long been famous among large industrial communities for the number and importance of its public benefactions, many of which were given by people to whom he directly ministered. And it is worthy of special remark that nearly two centuries after Bidle had stressed the need of personal interest when philanthropical work is to be done, Thom emphasizes the same note, while he no less impressively warns the would-be doer of good lest by injudicious methods he may be found guilty of increasing the very evils which he wishes to remove. Speaking in Liverpool in November 1845, he said, "there are but two things required to ensure a full flow of charity: that the veil of distance which hides the separate classes from one another be removed, so that human distress be actually witnessed by human sensibilities; and that we be made free of the

doubt whether we are not maintaining in existence the sources of the evil by artificially palliating their effects. For," he continues, " there is a chilling fear which knowledge lays upon compassion, lest it directly foster or create distress by the effort to relieve it." The whole of the address referred to [1] may be profitably studied by anyone who desires to form a right conception of Unitarian work for the public good. Side by side with the clearest recognition of an imperative call for living sympathy with our fellow-creatures in their trouble, there is a profound sense of responsibility with regard to the methods we adopt. Lack of insight into the origin and real nature of their miseries, and failure to forecast the more permanent consequences of such action as we may be disposed to take on their behalf, are alike to be deplored. Especially important is the need of humanizing all our ameliorative work. The relieved and the reliever should come together, so far as possible, man to man, and soul to soul. It is distinctly a misfortune that " organized " and official relief is so much necessitated by the present social arrangements. " In a right state of society," Mr. Thom maintains, " there would be no public charities of any kind whatsoever. The natural provisions which God makes for the subsistence of man, and the relief of his afflictions, would be found sufficient. These are : industrial labour, sustained and stimulated by the objects of desire that are natural to all men ; the ties of family and kindred, when incapacity or misfortune cuts off the supplies of personal exertion ; the charities of neighbourhood, which, when kindred fail, would flow spontaneously towards

[1] In *A Minister of God*, London, 1901, pp. 153 f.

unbefriended suffering, as often as by the occasions of acquaintance and vicinage it was brought under the notice of pitying hearts; and such a just and healthy condition of the relation of classes, of capital and labour, of employer and employed, as would bring them into moral connections with each other—and for the present absolute ignorance and material distance, or obstinate mechanical reserve, which no kind-hearted man would maintain towards a dumb animal, substitute the spiritual offices of a fraternal and respectful intercourse. I include this last," he continues, " among the natural provisions made by God to supply suffering with prompt relief—with responsible protectors—because, however the existing condition of society may disown the obligation, no man who believes in a God at all will deny that the ' diversities of gifts,' and the differences of ' operations,' are designed to subserve a spiritual purpose; and though there may be many ' members ' there should be ' one body ' ; and that ' the members should have the same care for one another.' "

We may here note that this eloquent advocate of the Christian love that works in wisdom adds an expression of his conviction that there is " both abounding wealth and, if it could be reached, abounding mercy in the community " ; the trouble is how to make use of the remedial resources possessed by society even as it is, and to apply these riches, material and moral, to the relief of God's poor—who are also man's poor—in such a way as to assist them truly, and not render them less able or less willing to help themselves. Highly characteristic is the stress which is laid upon the spiritual aspects of this problem of practical daily life. Bodily ills, however much to be

deplored, are not the worst evils that may happen to human beings: "it is a small thing that men perish in sickness and want, in comparison with the dreadfulness of their so perishing without stirring the hearts of their fellow-men to pity and help"; and, in particular, "the errors of the privileged and the powerful" are not "to be corrected by leaving unmitigated the sufferings of their victims"—as a soul-less Political Economy might teach—or "that human wretchedness is to be unrelieved, whilst attention is exclusively directed to the legislative principles on which the health of the future must depend." There is here obviously a case once more of "*These things ye ought to have done, and not to leave the others undone.*" Let actual needs be immediately supplied, and yet "almsgiving is not enough." And, once more, "we have no right so to relieve the misery of the present as to call into existence a greater amount of misery in the future. No institution is legitimate which multiplies the evil it professes to relieve." In the severest terms those institutions are condemned "which offer to release the poor from meeting in their own strength the great and solemn duties of home relations whose responsibilities they have assumed," for "the duties of life, voluntarily assumed, are only in extreme cases to be vicariously discharged, and ought never to be provided for by public charities."

These sentiments, alike of acute sensitiveness to the unmerciful sufferings and cruel privations of so many of our fellow-creatures and of gravest caution lest we dig a worse pit for them and ourselves to fall into, have certainly not been rendered obsolete by the lapse of years; on the contrary, while in spite of great improvements there is still but too much cause to lament the

condition of large numbers of the people, both in city and country, there is also ground for anxiety lest in organizing our forces against dire poverty and all that springs from it modern legislative measures—now that *laisser-faire* is long out of date—should tend to encourage a debilitating dependence upon "the State," instead of promoting self-respect and fostering "the manhood of the poor."

At this point, however, another feature distinguishing Unitarian philanthropy calls for special notice. In addition to the blend of compassion with caution, there comes into play a profoundly significant current of feeling as to the whole subject of human nature itself and its situation in the world-system.

Along with what may be called the religio-scientific tendency which has been described, there has arisen a definitely theological factor, which has left its mark in a striking way upon the story of Unitarian benevolence, whether exerted for the good of the indivdual or of society at large. Much has been said as to the suitability or otherwise of the doctrinal name "Unitarian" to suggest the true character of the stream of religious life and thought to which it has become attached; but assuredly it does not give any indication of the fact that one of the deepest and most copious sources of the stream, affecting all the rest, has been, and is, its special estimate of human nature. The question of the divine nature, we must feel, is also of undoubted importance to a man's religion, though not so much in regard to the interior "economy" of the Godhead as to what is conceived to be the divine character and purpose. The points dis-

puted among theologians as to the person and function of Jesus Christ, it is evident, have been considered equally important by a great many Christians, difference from the views of the large majority among them having in the past led to a rigorous ostracism of the heretics. As the years pass, however, the notorious difficulty of explaining, if not of officially formulating, precisely what the orthodox doctrine is, together no doubt with an ever-deepening sense of impropriety in any aloofness between those who sincerely look to Jesus as their leader and inspirer, seems to be reducing the heat of controversy on the subject and opening the way for a wider fellowship. But fundamental to the whole fabric of the Christian religion is the view held with respect to the nature, history, and potentialities of mankind; and just here, at whatever stage we examine the line of Unitarian development, we find a distinct cleavage from the ideas prevailing in the great orthodox Churches.

Of course this is not the occasion for any detailed survey of the successive steps in Unitarian thought upon the subject, from Reformation times till now; in the main they are sufficiently well known, and the characteristic thing about them is the repudiation, implicit or explicit, of that pessimistic theory which lies at the basis of orthodoxy. From the days of Augustine onward, the dominant view was that mortals were a hopelessly ruined race, inheriting with original sin a fatal incapacity for goodness, and depending absolutely upon a Divine Grace which, in its flowing upon the soul, was as far outside human reason and calculation as it was beyond any merit in the individual himself. This depressing view of human nature, widely associated with the name of Calvin from the

time of its re-formulation in the sixteenth century, entered into the new standards of doctrine then drawn up; we find it alike in the Thirty-nine Articles of the English Church (which, as Burke quoted from Lord Chatham in the House of Commons in 1790, has "a Calvinistic creed, a Popish liturgy, and an Arminian clergy"), and writ large in the Westminster Confession.

"Calvinism," says Channing, "teaches that in consequence of Adam's sin in eating the forbidden fruit, God brings into life all his posterity with a nature wholly corrupt, so that they are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually." With the supposed consequences of such a heritage and condition, the impending doom of the unsaved, the necessity and character of a divinely provided Atonement to avert that doom, and the sovereign decrees assigning some to eternal bliss and others to eternal misery—wholly irrespective of anything done or left undone by either—it is not our business to deal in this place. What may be more worth remembering is the fact that from the first the actual life of the men who dared to think for themselves and to cultivate the Christian virtues in the freedom wherewith, as they conceived, Christ had set them free, was the best practical repudiation they could give of this amazing and logically paralyzing theory. Needless to say, the monstrous obstruction which the authoritative theology placed in the path of any rational effort for man to work out his own salvation was more or less ignored or evaded in the case of many a Christian worker who thought himself sound in the faith; in spite of official articles and creeds men betrayed their disbelief in the incapacity of human reason, for

(in addition to quoting Scripture, as both sides did), while the heretics put everything to its test in their efforts to disprove the false, the orthodox no less certainly—if less resolutely—made appeal to the same court of man's logic and feeling, in order, as they hoped, to show it was not false, but true. Even the champions of the Creeds, who wrote so much in their defence against the Unitarian pamphleteers in the later years of the seventeenth century, showed themselves implicit believers in human nature's innate power of judging what is right; and nothing was more common in the years that followed than the desire to show the "reasonableness" of the Gospel scheme. The reduction of the essentials of Christian faith by such men as Baxter and Locke was a process which implied not simply the existence of many varieties of opinion on points of doctrine, but also their innocence; and, in short, the technically correct view was already found to be unworkable—the facts of experience and the theory of education, mental and moral alike, were against it. Of course, being so massively supported in official documents, the idea maintained a stubborn resistance for many years, but the tides of thought and feeling played against it, undermining it more and more.

Another essay in this volume tells the story of the decline of Calvinism, as an organized philosophy of religion, in New England, especially in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,[1] and of the rise of a sunnier system of thought in its stead. On this side of the Atlantic there were similar, though not identical, developments—a period of rather dry argumentation and dulled spiritual life; a vehement attempt to restore the authority of the old ideas, not without considerable

[1] *The Christian Way of Life*, by Dr. W. W. Fenn.

success; but at last a new birth of Christian thought and devotion, manifesting itself in a desire rather to live in the spirit of Jesus than to defend speculative points as to his origin and personality, and marked by a fervent belief in man as a true child of God, and in God as a true Father of man.

It is interesting here to note, as illustrative of the continuous and sometimes highly powerful influences passing from one side of the Atlantic to the other, that Channing, whose name is for ever associated with this new birth of Christianity, derived from Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) an idea that was destined to mark an epoch in religious development. This philosopher, of Scoto-Irish descent, held the chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow for the last seventeen years of his life, and being of a warm and attractive temperament, greatly influenced the minds of the numerous young men who were drawn to his classes from England and Ireland, especially from the Dissenting families. These in their turn became in due time influential in shaping the thoughts of those who belonged to the home circles; and it is noteworthy, therefore, to observe that Hutcheson's whole stress was in favour of an optimistic view of human nature. As against Hobbes, who placed self-love at the root of even those actions which take on an appearance of sympathy, he exalted "benevolence" to the supreme position; and though he might be charged with over-stating its motive power, at least he must be credited as a successful defender of man's nature and disposition against the depreciating and pessimistic theories of Hobbism and Calvinism alike.

How this admirable person led British philosophy distinctly forward from the positions, excellent as some of them were, maintained by Locke, and

himself left bases which were used as starting-points by Adam Smith and David Hume, would be an interesting story to tell, did space permit. But the thing that specially claims grateful attention in connection with our particular subject is his effect upon Channing. "It was while reading one day," says Dr. Martineau, "some of the various passages in which he asserts man's capacity for disinterested affection, and considers virtue as the sacrifice of private interests, and the bearing of private ills for the public good, or as self-devotion to absolute universal good, that there suddenly burst upon his mind that view of the dignity of human nature which was ever after to 'uphold and cherish' him, and thenceforth to be 'the fountain light of all his day, the master light of all his seeing.'"

The place where this revealing flash came over his mind, the clump of willows long (and perhaps still) standing "in the meadow a little to the north of Judge Dana's house," became sacred in his memory; he experienced emotions almost too great for words—nay, overcome by his vision of "the glory of the Divine disinterestedness, the privilege of existing in a universe of progressive order and beauty, the possibilities of spiritual destiny, the sublimity of devotedness to the Will of infinite Love," he "longed to die" (we read), "and felt as if heaven alone could give room for the exercise of such emotions." [1] From the heights of insight and feeling attained in that memorable hour the great proclaimer of *the Dignity of Human Nature* went forth inspired and inspiring. For him, and through him for multitudes, the clouds of disbelief in man, the child of God, were lifted, and a light began to spread over all mankind,

[1] *Types of Ethical Theory* (Martineau), Vol. II. pp. 478–9.

making it thenceforth a joy to labour for human progress, and not a joy only, but a confident hope. Who so unwearying as he in asserting and re-asserting the high potency of the soul, any human soul on earth? "All minds are of one family. . . . We know not the worth of a man. . . . One sublime idea has taken strong hold of my mind. It is the greatness of the soul, its divinity, its union with God, not by passive dependence, but by spiritual likeness." His writings are strewn thickly with such luminous words. As for Christ, he affirms without hesitation that "the great principle in the depth of Christ's character . . . was his conviction of the greatness of the human soul." Again: "Jesus respected human nature, he felt it to be his own. . . . I no longer see anything to prevent our becoming whatever was good and great in Jesus on earth." And as for Christ's function and errand, he says: "To exalt human nature and to save men from sin, not from its punishment, was the purpose of Christ on earth." He works the theme over in many lights; note the following, in which he points out that, as we have already reflected, even the impugners of human reason must needs imply its capacity in the moment of trying to argue it away: "A trust in our ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood is implied in every act of belief; for to question this ability would of necessity unsettle all belief. We cannot take a step in reasoning or action without a secret reliance on our own minds." [1]

Now it may well be felt by many who at this day read such enthusiastic language about this poor fallible manhood of ours that there is overstatement here, that an *advocatus diaboli* would have little difficulty in setting up a pretty strong

[1] *Works* (London and Edinburgh, 1884), p. 340.

case in opposition. But to do Channing justice, it must be observed that he never blinded his eyes to the blots on the records of this so wonderful human nature. "I know its history," he said, "I shut my eyes on none of its weaknesses and crimes." It was the sense of the blackness of the blots, a horror of the infamies that appear where so much real divineness is possible, that imparts such intensity of passion to his pleading. And perhaps some allowance must be made for the newness of such thoughts, and the greater nearness in those days of the dark background of theological despair against which the new vision stood in brilliant relief. We may also suppose that even in Channing's day some of those who heard him and in the main welcomed his evangel were more prosaic in temper than he; as probably among the young students who listened to Hutcheson's vindication of the "benevolence" of mankind by nature there might be minds of a sober cast who would listen, not unpleased, and yet would go away from their university to mingle in social and public affairs with but a moderate expectation of goodness and disinterestedness in those whom they should meet. But in either case there must have been a sense of change in the outlook upon men; the theological climate had become milder, more encouraging to human effort, and it is certain that alike in Old England and New England an immense accession was soon observed to the forces that make for the elevation of the masses.

This kind of philanthropy, it is true, does not make so imposing a spectacle as the kind that begets vast and all-but desperate missionary enterprises in order, if possible by any means, to rescue the benighted heathen from the terrible

fate of future damnation; such a splendour as shines about the name of William Carey, who in the same generation as was addressed by Channing founded the Baptist Missionary Society, with results far-reaching indeed, though in many aspects different from what was originally conceived, is not to be looked for here. But the fiery zeal that springs from terror akin to despair is one thing, while the patient endurance in wise well-doing, in the confidence that harvests of orderly, healthful and useful life are sure, however slowly gained, is quite another. It is this latter kind of philanthropy that is found at work year by year, and generation after generation, among those who have been freed from a theory of ruined humanity and given the encouraging view that man, individually and collectively, is still in the making; that the race is no more an outlawed and depraved stock than the fields and waters of earth are laid under a curse; and that if the workers are but wise enough and resolute enough, the work of human amelioration may become just as certain in methods and results as are the processes of agriculture and the science of navigation. That the degree of wisdom required is great indeed, that the benevolent heart needs all the guidance it can get from the well-stored mind and a shrewdly forecasting intelligence, is certain; in what follows we are to watch some of the experimenters at work, by way of learning the spirit of their varied but unceasing endeavour. Here, as elsewhere, the constructive hand has to learn by practice; and while some successes that have been attained prove beyond question the rightness of the methods adopted, our philanthropy is evidently very far from having solved all the intricate problems involved in the modern stage of human develop-

ment and organization. To trace out the real causes of the misery, degradation and waste of human material in the world, and to apply remedies that shall be free from the defects so frequently attached to the charity of mere "alms-giving," is a task that must tax the utmost skill and energy of Christ-like people for many a year to come. But this at least the Unitarian knows—his efforts are well worth while. If man is not a ruined creature, but a being still "mewing his mighty youth"—if, as cannot be denied, human nature, even in quite ordinary men, women, and children, is endowed with untold potencies of unfolding excellence—it is well worth the philanthropist's while to set to work upon such marvellous material. And if, as the Unitarian is of all believers in God most assured, the situation in which man discovers himself has come about under the steadfast reign of a Law which is at the same time Love, then the social reformer's work becomes more than ever a safe investment of the capital of his years and strength.

II. Practical Illustrations.

In turning now to a contemplation of philanthropies done or attempted by Unitarians, we must obviously confine our record to illustrative examples only; anything like a full story would be far too extensive to be brought within the compass of a few pages, and even were it possible to be told, such a history could but too readily slip into a self-applausive tone quite alien to all genuine philanthropy, whether Unitarian or other. More to be regretted is our geographical limitation—which is unavoidable—in the choice of examples for presentation to the reader's consideration;

very probably, any story of the kind from an American pen would reveal some instances far more striking than those in that country which naturally occur even to an English writer. The field covered by Unitarian philanthropy in the United States is indeed ample, and its harvests have been most bountiful. But while perforce we must content ourselves here with naming but one or two of the most famous efforts put forth by American Unitarians, it may be relied upon that, as far as the essentials are concerned, the spirit and methods of our workers are the same in both lands, however the details may vary owing to the difference in local conditions.

One outstanding feature in the American story is the special emphasis laid by what has been called "Channing Unitarianism" on practical goodness, personal and social. It has been charged, indeed, with giving too little attention to modern speculation and philosophy, and with having for its main motive an ethical, human and secular interest. Channing himself in his later years was most widely known, not as a controversialist on Christian doctrine, but as a Christian philanthropist. The subjects of general education, temperance, humaner laws, the reclamation of criminals, and international peace were the most frequent topics considered in his writing and lecturing, and the social and political aspects of slavery engaged his most earnest study and called forth his most eloquent pleading for human freedom in every sense of the word. Circumstances having placed many of the earliest New England Unitarians in positions of high social and political ascendancy, they were to be seen on every side discharging with high integrity and efficiency the great public trusts which devolved upon them. The tradition

set up in the first generation has been finely sustained in those that have followed; and when Emerson, Parker and others infused new (and, to some, startling) ideas into the teachings of the pulpit, the practice alike of people and ministers ran in the same channels of enlightened social service. It must suffice here to recall but a few of the names of leaders most prominently associated with these high endeavours: H. W. Bellows, W. H. Furness, J. Freeman Clarke, Samuel May, Robert Collyer, W. C. Gannett, and Edward Everett Hale; and to select but three particular instances which stand out amid this lustrous cloud of witnesses to "the faith that works." Two of them are of world-wide fame, while the third will serve to bring our story back to the English side.

Dorothea Lynde Dix (1802–1887), it is well known, derived incentive and inspiration for her really wonderful work on behalf of prisoners and the insane from her personal experience as teacher in Dr. Channing's household; but it is also worthy of note that at a critical juncture in her life she came under the benignly stimulating influence of Mr. William Rathbone (1787–1868), one of the memorable company of citizen philanthropists who belonged to the congregation of John Hamilton Thom at Liverpool. Miss Dix, physically frail from her earliest years, suffered much from sickness, and it was as an invalid that, in 1836, she became a guest in Mr. Rathbone's hospitable home. Here a long rest gave her health once more, and rendered her ardently ready for such "whisper of the soul," as Channing would say, as might call her—being now happily released from the burden of professional toil—to any special duty

in the world. Returning to Boston, she was introduced by a Divinity School student to Sunday School work in a women's prison in East Cambridge. In the course of her visits to the prison she happened to hear that a number of hapless lunatics were herded together in grossly neglected conditions in a department of the same institution, although entirely guiltless of any offence against the law. Her womanly good sense, as well as Christian sympathy with these poor creatures, rose in indignant protest against their outrageous treatment; but with characteristic prudence and practical sagacity she made it her task, prior to any public effort for reform, to inquire personally into the facts of the system as it existed generally. For the next two years she went from place to place, through the State of Massachusetts, seeing for herself the whole deplorable business—the cruelty, stupidity and sheer hopelessness of the treatment of the insane at that period. Then, and not till then, having made sure of the truth of the matter, she made publicly known the horrors carried on in the midst of a community supposed to be specially enlightened and civilized. A storm of denial and opposition arose, but the courageous soul never flinched from the work given her to do; and, when at last she had succeeded in opening the eyes and touching the hearts of the New England public, she journeyed far and wide through the States, a feeble, lonely woman, braving hardships and perils of all kinds, in order that this work should be properly done. The story of Dorothea Dix is surely one of the most wonderful in the records of modern Christian beneficence, alike in regard to the physical insignificance of the human instrument and the magnitude of the improvements brought about.

Even when old and all but worn out with her labours, she is found travelling throughout Europe, bent on the same errand of mercy; and in this connection it is humiliating to all who are jealous for the reputation of the Christian name to note her remark when visiting the asylums of Constantinople. So intelligent did she find the treatment of the insane that she concluded, "There is nothing here for me to do." It would be impossible to measure the full extent and value to human life, both among the prisoners and the patients and those in whose temporary custody these unfortunates were placed, of the reforms owing to this feeble Unitarian woman's efforts.

The beneficent, and in some aspects romantic work of Samuel Gridley Howe (1801–1876), in regard to the education of defectives, especially of the blind, has left its mark on the history of all such efforts in our times. The case of Laura Bridgman, who, in addition to being blind, was also deaf and dumb, was made famous in this country by Charles Dickens, who paid a glowing tribute to the ingenuity and perseverance by which Dr. Howe succeeded in reaching the mind of this poor girl, imprisoned as it was in complete silence and total darkness, and set it free for intelligent participation in mental and spiritual intercourse. This famous example, however, was but one of many brilliant successes reached through his methods, which have been followed and extended, with untold benefit to the blind, in all parts of the civilized world. Incidentally, the name of his wife also, Julia Ward Howe (1819–1910), may be appropriately introduced here, as representing a numerous band of social workers on behalf of the depressed classes, including those immigrants whose arrival in the States has increased in no

small degree the social problems of their adopted country.

With the name of Dr. Joseph Tuckerman (1778–1840) we pass, as already indicated, to the English side of the subject. This friend and co-worker with Dr. Channing visited England in 1833 after having successfully conducted a "Domestic Mission" in Boston for some years. The special nature of this kind of effort consisted in the attempt to carry religious teaching and moral support into the homes of the poor; and, although it was soon found that the provision of a common meeting-place was also desirable, this feature of house-to-house visitation was reckoned an essential of the Mission. Tuckerman had been invited by the Rathbones to stay with them at Liverpool in order to make his method and aims better known; and so impressed were the English Unitarians with the need for such a philanthropic work and with its immense possibilities of good that the idea was quickly appropriated and acted upon. Even before his visit the fame of his new effort had attracted warm interest in England.

William Johnson Fox (1786–1864)—secretary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 1830–1831, himself a powerful pleader for social reform who attained much celebrity as a politician and Member of Parliament as well as a writer and preacher—entered into the new project with much earnestness. The Association eagerly welcomed the proposal to found such an effort, and it is interesting to record that Fox, in 1831, privately offered to James Martineau, then a rising minister not yet thirty, the organization and charge of a Domestic Mission in London. Martineau, however, had to decline entering upon a missionary career with which he had indeed the deepest

sympathy—as he showed again and again in his after years—but for which he felt insufficiently apt; to use his own words, he "was conscious of no adequate store of resource and hopefulness for such a work." Unitarians in many of the larger cities were soon successful in founding Missions of this kind, and though they were from the first intended to draw support from as many religious persons as cared to unite in the same scheme, irrespective of their orthodoxy or heterodoxy, it is due to Unitarians mainly that they acquired a permanent place in Christian philanthropy in the nineteenth century.

It has been mentioned above that personal visitation by the missionary was a distinguishing feature of these efforts; another was the personal co-operation of the laity. In London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and other great centres, groups of earnest and intelligent men and women, often people of culture and good social position, were drawn into the work, with undoubted gains both to it and to the workers, who thus came into direct contact with the problems and possibilities, good and bad, of the poor. Two such workers should be specially recalled. One was Mary Carpenter (1807–1877), who was a young woman of twenty-six when Dr. Tuckerman became the guest of her father, Dr. Lant Carpenter, minister at Lewin's Mead, Bristol. Writing to her brother, Russell Lant Carpenter (1816–1892), who, like so many members of that celebrated family, was himself a devoted and far-sighted philanthropist, she described with evident enthusiasm the character and career of their American visitor—she says, he "is quite an Oberlin."

Mary Carpenter's father included among his numerous efforts for the public good a zealous

interest in Sunday Schools, and she had already taught a class of children drawn from the narrow streets around the chapel. But it was an observation of Dr. Tuckerman's which directed her mind towards the importance of acquiring a much closer knowledge of the life of her scholars than the ordinary intercourse of the school-hour could give her. He and she were one day walking together in the neighbourhood, when a miserable, ragged boy darted out of a dark entry and rushed wildly across their path. "That child," remarked Dr. Tuckerman, "should be followed to his home and seen after." Nothing further occurred at the moment, but as long as thirty-six years later Miss Carpenter declared that the words had sunk deeply into her mind, producing an indelible impression. Becoming conscious that there was a much more urgent kind of service for her to do than any she had so far attempted, she set about organizing a Working and Visiting Society in which ladies of gentle refinement gladly enrolled themselves. But it was soon apparent to her sensible mind that much that lay around in the squalid dwellings of the poor was too deeply steeped in misery and degradation to be properly dealt with by her lady associates. She therefore resolved, with the ready approval of Dr. Tuckerman, to establish a regular Ministry to the Poor on the New England model. Here was an advance, yet after a short time even this was inadequate, in her judgment, to cope with the ills of a debased and debasing slum life. Applying her whole mind to the subject, as the good Unitarian should, she made diligent inquiry into all the records then available on juvenile rescue work.

The upshot was the formation of a "Ragged School" in Bristol, a few years later than the

death of John Pounds (1766–1839), a simple Unitarian philanthropist whose career has often excited interest, as it well deserves to do. A poor shoemaker living in Portsmouth, he enticed to his tiny shop, the shell of which still stands, scores of the little ragamuffins of the streets, giving them elementary instruction, fatherly sympathy and advice, and (the story goes) an occasional baked potato when the days were cold. Modest as this good Portsmouth work was, it made a start along lines of Christian beneficence which have since widened out splendidly; and Dr. Thomas Guthrie of Edinburgh, one of the most famous of those who have laboured for the neglected city Arabs, has himself warmly acknowledged that it was "this poor, obscure old man" who led the way.[1]

But we must return to the good work of Mary Carpenter, though the full story would indeed be voluminous. Not satisfied with her Ragged School, wonderfully successful as it sometimes showed itself under her hands, she aimed higher. She had discerned, as she says, "a holy spot in every child's heart," and again, "the indestructible germ of a divine nature in the unhappy little beings who, if not rescued, were doomed to become paupers or criminals"; and effectively to rescue them something more was required than the intermittent—however helpfully stimulating—influence of the classroom. The problem was deepened formidably by the habitual delinquency of many of the children, who grew up in daily demoralizing surroundings, even if they were not directly led into crime by their parents and relatives. Once more she put her vigorous brain to work; she made careful researches into such

[1] Speech at Edinburgh, January 1855.

reformatory experiments as had already been made in Scotland, Ireland, the United States, and on the Continent, and detecting many blots on the existing system, she began a series of able writings in which it was made clear that a radical change was needed. Instead of repression and punishment, this miserable mass of human material—each individual in it being possessed of an "indestructible germ of a divine nature"—called for intelligent and sympathetic guidance, and for continuous training, at the proper stage, in useful industry as well as in morals and religion. Insisting on these principles, she became instrumental in bringing about far-reaching improvements, not only in the formation of industrial schools for boys and girls, but also in creating humaner, as well as really wiser and more profitable, conceptions of ordinary prison management and discipline. When it is added that Mary Carpenter, moved thereto by the memorable visit to this country of the great Indian theist and reformer, Rajah Rammohun Roy (1780–1833), in the later years of her life made no fewer than four extended visits to India and initiated there many beneficent movements, especially for women and the depressed classes, her remarkable energy in well-doing is obvious.

A second conspicuous instance of the influence of Dr. Tuckerman's personality and ideas on the stream of English Unitarian philanthropy is afforded by the life of William Rathbone (1819–1902), the sixth of that name, into whose father's home in Liverpool there came a constant stream of persons of high ideals and noble practice. Young Rathbone seems to have derived from such visitors an immense store of spiritual stimulus as well as practical enlightenment in regard to

benevolent efforts, and, undoubtedly, the preaching and conversation of John Hamilton Thom were invaluable helps in the formation of his character. During his early manhood the restrictive claims of business were imperative, but at the age of thirty he became a visitor for a Provident Society, and thenceforward for half a century his philanthropic labours were as incessant as they were various. The lowly duties of this apprenticeship to social effort were of priceless value to him in carrying out his later great designs for the public good. True to the best traditions of the religious stock into which his father (who came of Quaker descent) had grafted the family, William Rathbone entered into direct personal friendship with those whom he met in the poor tenements which he visited; he learned to understand the actual daily difficulties of poor people and to respect their wonderful patience, their boundless capacity for sympathy with trouble, and the hidden stores of faculty which only needed favourable conditions to prove richly fruitful. Such experiences made him a firm believer in human nature, while the constant culture and exercise of a devout spirit kept him ever close to the highest Inspirer of hope and love.

About ten years after the beginning of this work in the slums, Mr. Rathbone had a sad experience which led to one of his most beneficent efforts. His wife fell ill and at length died; and amid his own sorrows his mind turned towards those multitudes in the great city who, at such times as he had experienced, could not have in their own homes the blessing of skilled nursing. The great public hospitals—which from the eighteenth century onwards have received abundant support, alike in money and in personal administration, from Unitarians—made provision for the sick,

it is true, in an institutional way. But would it not be a great boon if properly trained nurses were available for home-service also? A few tentative experiments in this direction proved so surprisingly satisfactory that he himself built a Training School and Home for Nurses as an auxiliary to the Liverpool Infirmary. It is interesting here to observe that in planning this particular work he had the assistance of the world-renowned Florence Nightingale, who, though formally attached to the very "broadest" Church of England, always manifested a warm practical regard for Unitarian effort. It was natural, indeed, for her to do so, her grandfather being that William Smith, M.P. (1756–1835), who, along with his many benevolent labours—including Anti-Slave Trade work—united keen political instincts, and is memorable as having secured, in 1813, the passing of the Act that freed Unitarians from legal disabilities. The modern system of District Nursing, which sprang into existence under Rathbone's wise and beneficent charity, has certainly proved invaluable all over the country. This, however, is but one of the many philanthropies of this good man. As a Member of Parliament he rendered great service (in the background of committee-rooms mostly) to many a beneficial measure of social reform; and, in particular, his criticisms of a Poor Law system so largely divorced from true charity—as exhibited by "persons to persons"—did much to rouse his generation from slumbrous acquiescence in a soul-deadening tradition. His zeal and munificence alike in the cause of the higher education, conspicuously shown in the promotion of two University Colleges—of Liverpool and North Wales respectively—would alone have made him famous among the benefactors of his

time. But to the last of his long and busy life, William Rathbone's chief interest seemed to centre in the matters that came closest to the common people's daily life. Where other speakers would speak mere platitudes, as if lowly virtues and homely efforts were all too negligible to deserve sincere consideration, he spoke better (we are told) than on any other occasion—" his speaking had all the effect of opening a window and letting in air and sunshine upon a stuffy room." And his biographer's testimony in this matter strikes once more the note which has been heard throughout this story of Unitarian philanthropy : " His very appearance on the platform, his eager look, and the ring in his voice, recalled the slumbering audience to a consciousness of the *vital human needs* that lay behind the dull mechanism of charity or thrift, as, in clear strong sentences, few and fit, and aglow with the fire of his enthusiasm, he spoke out of the experience of a lifetime of the principles and methods that should guide their work." [1]

It may be specially appropriate at this point to adduce a signal service rendered to the health of the community by one who is certainly not so well known to fame as he deserves to be, and whose type of benevolent activity may be described as constructional rather than remedial. Dr. Thomas Southwood Smith (1788–1861) was in early manhood a Unitarian minister, and a volume entitled *Illustrations of the Divine Government* preserves a series of lectures delivered by him at Edinburgh from 1813 onwards; the book is said to have been much admired by many eminent writers, including Wordsworth and Byron. Graduating in medicine

[1] *William Rathbone, a Memoir.* By Eleanor F. Rathbone, London, 1905, p. 396.

in 1816, he removed to London in 1820 as a private practitioner; but being appointed physician to the London Fever Hospital in 1823, his attention was thenceforward concentrated on questions of hygiene, with such good results that during the rest of his life he became increasingly recognized as the leading authority on all matters connected with the public health, and his advice was eagerly sought by Government departments and Members of Parliament in framing legislation on the subject. It is interesting to note, in passing, that the eminent and epoch-marking Dutch physician Boerhaave (1668–1738) was also a man of exemplary piety of the Unitarian type, and that among those who heard him lecture at Leyden was one of like religious mind, who in due time became illustrious in the same noble profession. This was Sir John Pringle (1707–1782), a man of singularly wide culture (he was President of the Royal Society, 1772–1778), who warmly espoused the simple Unitarian Christianity which he discovered for himself in the Bible, and who, according to Dr. John Brown,[1] was "our earliest health reformer, the first who in this country turned his mind and that of the public to hygiene as a part of civil polity," and whose zeal for the "prevention" of disease contrasted with the ignorance and indifference which saw nothing to aim at but its cure. The claim made for Southwood Smith, that he was "the father of sanitary reform," must therefore be abated in view of Pringle's career, but in the words of his recorder in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, he died comparatively poor, "having earned the gratitude of nations."

[1] *Horae Subsecivæ*, Edinburgh, 1858, p. 268.

To prevent, rather than to cure, not disease only, nor only degradation and crime, but the squalid poverty which is so fertile a soil for all these evils—that, surely, is a further great reform, perhaps the greatest that challenges Christian philanthropy. The problem is far, very far, from being solved, and certainly no religious community can pretend to have any specific for its solution; probably those social reformers will be found wisest who are most aware of the wide variety of causes, moral as well as economic, physical as well as psychological, which are involved in this question, and who rather place their trust in gradual progress, by well-considered paths, than in any sudden reversal of methods and usages long established in human society. Into some at least of the more assured paths of betterment Unitarians have pressed zealously, and not without good results. Regarding human nature hopefully, as they do, they recognize at the same time its needs, foremost among them being *Education*, in the fullest sense of the word. John Locke's opinion on the subject seems to them to rest on plain commonsense and experience: "I think I may say that, of all the men we meet with, nine parts are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education"; [1] and when full allowance is made for the failures of the dull on the one hand and for native genius on the other, the opinion cited furnishes undoubtedly a good working rule. Accordingly, there has been probably nothing that has more moved Unitarians to enthusiasm than the subject of the education of the people. Early in the field with their Sunday schools—not for children only, but for

[1] *Thoughts concerning Education*, Sect. i.

adolescents and adults whose elementary education had been but little or none at all, and many of whom rose high, thanks to the start thus made—not infrequently adding out of their strained resources day schools attached in the old days to their chapels, our people were always among the most eager, in Parliament or out, to press for a national system. And since 1870, when School Boards were instituted, they have shown themselves equally eager in personal service in connection with the schools. Not confining their interest to children or to elementary education, they have steadily insisted on widening the scope of the nation's educational work in every useful way possible, preferring to spend freely in culture rather than run the risks of a popular mentality only half awakened. Thus they have increasingly assisted all movements tending to diffuse fuller knowledge and higher tastes, and while Colleges and Universities have received invaluable help from Unitarians—witness London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Leicester—their interest has been keen in lecture-schemes devised for the benefit of the smaller towns and villages. To give a list of their benefactions in libraries, museums, galleries of art, and other aids to the general culture would seem ostentatious; let it be sufficient here to name some of those of Sir Henry Tate (1819–1899), viz., great reference libraries at University College, Liverpool, and Manchester College, Oxford; free libraries in four London boroughs; munificent gifts to the Nurses' Fund, the Hahnemann Hospital and the Infirmary, Liverpool; and the splendid Art Gallery, London, which is known by his name—as typical of this form of public service by Unitarians.

Among the modern colleges, in whose behalf there

has been special Unitarian effort, are those for *Women*. In no department, perhaps, has that effort been warmer or, indeed, more significant in aim. To the intelligent observer it must be clear that human society could not but suffer serious loss as long as one half or more of the population was deprived of the full benefits of wise training and development, physical as well as mental, in early years. Still more grievous must be the loss when so large a proportion of the nation was stinted in the means of civic self-protection, or, being weak, was left unprotected by the strong. Most deplorable of all was the case when, in addition to a low standard of education and a restricted field of employment, there was degrading discrimination against one sex in the eyes of the law which should impartially guard the personal rights of all. Only after a long and stern fight were the shameful disabilities removed which a notorious legislation had imposed upon women, simply as women, and in this struggle Unitarians took a leading part—notably William Shaen (1820–1887), James Stansfield (1820–1898), and Anna Swanwick (1813–1899). Naturally the moral aspects of the Woman question assume the foremost place, but no intelligent study of conditions in the modern State can miss the bearings of the subject on the problems of health, poverty, vice, and industrial organization. The last named of these problems has undoubtedly been rendered more complex by the fuller entry of women into spheres and occupations formerly closed against them; and it has become increasingly evident in recent years that human society is as yet only in the earlier stages of development in this matter, as in others. May we not venture to hope, however, that on the pages of Unitarian record some

indications may be found of the spirit, if not also of the precise methods, by which a thorough-going reorganization of our social life may be successfully approached?

For example, it is not without a refreshing sense that we look back to the interesting story of that first of the philanthropists with whose name we started upon the present study. Thomas Firmin, we find, being well convinced that poverty must be cured, if cured it can be, not by gifts, but by earnings (gained in an atmosphere of goodwill), started "work-houses" for the poor, employing them in linen manufacture and paying them "at the current rate." At least so we read; but it has to be admitted that "the current rate" was so low that the good employer felt irresistibly moved to supplement the wages in various kindly ways. The close of the seventeenth century, however, proved what two centuries more have even more abundantly confirmed—that all such experiments have to be carried on in a big world, much too big and varied in quality and method to be left out of account. Like the avalanche, it must in the long run move "altogether, or not at all." Firmin lost money at his venture. But he never lost heart, and we see him busied in all sorts of benevolent work, as well as engaged in broad-minded intercourse with men of different religious opinions till the end of his life. The next century, however, gives us a memorable picture of a more successful industrial method. Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795), the first of a series of Josiahs down to the present day, whose skill and business ability were combined with a too unusual personal care for his workpeople, raised to world-wide fame the pottery works which, founded in the seven-

teenth century, is at the present time "an institution," as the living bearer of the name says. Here employers and employed have profitably lived and worked together generation after generation, in good times and bad, sharing a proud tradition of good work done and mutual care preserved. The first Josiah was the friend of such men as Priestley, Franklin, and Clarkson, and warmly shared their ideals of human freedom and elevation; and the anti-slavery passion passed on from father to son, till we find the head of the family a century ago buying land in as many counties as possible for the sole purpose of recording his votes, in those pre-Reform days, against slavery. As for the relations between the firm and the workmen, "surely," writes the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, "paternalism never went further in any industry. After the mid-day meal was over, or in the evenings, my father read aloud to 'the hands'—read Macaulay and John Stuart Mill." [1]

One more glimpse into the industrial field shows us John Fielden (1784–1849), a prosperous cloth manufacturer at Todmorden, on the western border of Yorkshire, who, beginning as a Quaker, early became a Unitarian—a grafting that has frequently proved singularly fruitful among us. Himself a mill-worker at the age of ten—but (so mild were the laws in those days) not allowed to work "more than ten hours a day," while the older operatives often toiled from twelve to fifteen hours a day—John Fielden was an enthusiastic personal worker in the elementary schools which sprang up at his instigation in those rather bleak moorland valleys, and his interest in his workpeople

[1] *Essays and Adventures of a Labour M.P.* By Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, M.P., London, 1924.

was as intelligent as it was untiring. But he was not only laudably eminent in thus recognizing the duties of " capital " to " labour " in his own special sphere; being elected Member of Parliament, he took a valiant share in the thirty years' campaign for a Ten Hours Bill, and pushed it to final success. Lord Ashley (afterwards Lord Shaftesbury) had long been indebted to Fielden for pertinent material in the discussions on Factory legislation; and when the famous leader of the Parliamentary group who were engaged in pressing this reform lost his seat in 1846, it was Fielden who took charge of the Bill and carried it into law in the following year. Eighty years ago the limitation of the mill-worker's day to ten hours was such a boon, and had been so long struggled for against the selfish and short-sighted opposition of the general run of employers and capitalists, that Fielden was deservedly hailed as among the deliverers of the poor; and his statue reminds the present generation how such broad-minded and large-hearted masters as he led the way to better times.

It must be left to the informed imagination to conceive of the extent and value of the services rendered to the community at large by a constant succession of men of ability and unswerving integrity—mill-owners, manufacturers, engineers, founders, ship-owners, merchants, and so on—who have organized and successfully conducted so large a share of the industrial and commercial activities of the nation as that which has been in the hands of Unitarians. That this type of social service is not undertaken solely for altruistic reasons certainly does not take away from its usefulness as contributing to the general well-being in normal times; and at any rate it seems clear that the evils which too much shadow the present system of

trade and industry are largely due to a failure to pursue the ideals of human worth and of genuine kinship with our fellow-men which certainly characterize the Unitarian at his best. Meanwhile, may there not be a ray of special promise in a principle of which Edward Owen Greening (1836–1923) was a lifelong and largely successful promoter—the principle of Co-operation? There were, indeed, many fine aspects of the philanthropic mind exhibited in this typical Unitarian worker of the least obtrusive kind. Old enough to have been an ardent friend of fugitive slaves, he was sixty years ago a close fellow-worker with Kingsley, Maurice, Holyoake, Hughes, Vansittart Neale, and others—including Henry Solly (1813–1903), one of the most energetic promoters of Working Men's Clubs and Institutes—in all kinds of effort for the uplifting of the poor; and while he was ever eager to preach the gospel of Labour Co-partnership as a remedy for poverty, it is peculiarly pleasant to recall the enthusiasm with which, as an expert in horticulture, he endeavoured to brighten with flowers the drab monotony of the slums.

There remains to be illustrated, finally, a field of philanthropic labour in which, in addition to work for temperance, thrift, peace, and other great causes, Unitarians have been conspicuous for many years—the sphere of *Civic Administration*. Allusion has been already made to their Parliamentary efforts; these are familiar to the historians of our times, and no details are necessary here. But the publicly known activities of Unitarian M.P.'s have been supplemented also by a vast amount of painstaking research and constructive planning by them and their Unitarian brethren,

the fruits of which are apparent in much of the beneficent legislation of the Victorian period; and it would be a profoundly interesting and stimulating inquiry to investigate the inner history of that circle of writers and publicists of which Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) was the centre and Sir John Bowring (1792–1872) a versatile and famous member. It would probably be found that a hundred years ago the Unitarian influence was much more weighty in the direction of social reform than has hitherto been conceived. But while the due preparation and the enactment of good laws are matters of high importance, the practical application of good laws is of higher importance still. And when it is borne in mind that a great deal of the local administrator's work is necessarily obscure, often humdrum and tedious and sometimes vexatious, there must surely be no little zeal for the common good when men and women are found, as Unitarians so frequently have been, voluntarily burdening themselves with public cares and discharging faithfully and well those practical duties that save the statutes from being a dead letter and render their potential wisdom beneficially actual. It is a noteworthy fact that when an annual " Citizen Sunday " was instituted some years ago, the proportion of Unitarian ministers and congregations who adopted the custom was very high—higher, it is believed, than that in any other religious body.

Probably no more brilliant example of this type of service to the community could be quoted than that furnished by the career of Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1913). Sprung of a Unitarian family long connected with an ancient congregation in the City of London, he began business life in Birmingham at the age of eighteen; and, ever energetic, he

was to be seen, after his day's work was done, teaching classes in history, French, arithmetic, and so on, in the night-school connected with the Church of the Messiah, being also a teacher in the Sunday School. "From his youth onward," says his son, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, "he was one of those who see visions and dream dreams. . . . To his last day he seemed too young to be content to leave things as they are . . . ever seeking in the future something better, something greater, something nobler than the present." [1] How deep was his sympathy with suffering is clear alike from his words and his deeds. In a speech delivered at the Hurst Street Mission just half a century ago, he quoted the word "Radical"—at that time an alarming epithet—and said, "I am a Radical Reformer because I would reform and remove ignorance, poverty, intemperance and crime from their very roots. What is the cause of all this ignorance and vice? Many people say that intemperance is at the bottom of everything, and I am not inclined to disagree with them. . . . But at the same time I believe intemperance itself is only an effect produced by causes that lie deeper still. I should say these causes, in the first place, are the gross ignorance of the masses, and in the second, the horrible, shameful homes in which many of the poor have to live. . . . The fact is, in our Missions we begin at the wrong end; we attempt to apply remedies to diseases which ought never to exist in the social state at all. What we ought to do is to prevent disease, and then we shall not want the remedy." In the same year (1874) we find him re-emphasizing in startling terms the terrible evils due to slum

[1] *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, London, 1914, Vol. I. Intro. by Mr. Austen Chamberlain.

life, aggravated as they are by the slum-dwellers' "utter want of knowledge of the conditions of cleanliness and health."[1] That Mr. Chamberlain's words were neither the platitudes of a conventional pietist nor the mere foam of political agitation is best proved by the record of his personal efforts, as indicated in a contribution by the Rev. R. W. Dale to the biography of Dr. W. H. Crosskey (1826–1893), himself the public-spirited Unitarian minister of the Church of the Messiah. "A few Birmingham men," wrote Dr. Dale, "made the discovery that perhaps a strong and able Town Council might do almost as much to improve the conditions of life in the town as Parliament itself. . . . It now became the ambition of young men, and cultivated men, and men of high social position, to represent a ward and to become aldermen and mayors." The same writer describes the "glowing enthusiasm" with which speakers at the November ward meetings spoke of "sweeping away streets in which it was not possible to live a healthy and decent life; of making the town cleaner, sweeter and brighter; of providing gardens, and parks, and music; of erecting baths and free libraries, an art gallery and a museum." It was even suggested that the "glories of Florence" might be rivalled, and that "Birmingham too might become the home of a noble literature and art."

George Dawson (1821–1876), says Dale, was the "prophet" of the new movement—he was a liberal preacher closely akin to, though not identified with, the Unitarians. But though Mr. Dawson had been for many years teaching that "unless the best and ablest men in a community were willing to serve it, *new laws could not make*

[1] *Speeches*, Vol. I. pp. 42–5.

any great reformation," he "had not the kind of faculty for putting his generous faith into practice. This was largely done by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain . . . who gave himself to the municipal work with a contagious enthusiasm. He did not merely enter the Council, give a large amount of time and strength to its committees, make striking and eloquent speeches on the new municipal policy; he used his social influence to add strength to the movement. He appealed in private to men of ability who cared nothing for public life," insisting that what they were able to do for the town "it was their duty to do." [1] And so it came about that there gathered about this man of visions and of vigour as remarkable a body of able and high-minded citizen workers as were perhaps ever seen in local administrative life; among them, indeed, were men of different religious sympathies, as was right, but the distinguishing feature of the group was the large proportion who bore such well-known Unitarian names as Kenrick, Nettlefold, Martineau, Osler, Beale, Peyton, Russell, Harding, and so on. The result of their combined zeal and ability was an immense improvement which, if it did not make a Warwickshire Florence of the town, certainly gave it a world-wide fame for good government, and left to the next generation the proud and ever-challenging heritage of a great example.

As a pendant, however, to the story of Mr. Chamberlain's municipal and political career, extending over many years, and exhibiting quite extraordinary force of reforming genius, it is still a glaring blot on our social system that Housing conditions are deplorable. But the task of social reformers is

[1] *Henry William Crosskey, his Life and Work*, by R. A. Armstrong, Birmingham, 1895, pp. 248 f.

one apparently of "ever climbing up the climbing wave." Baron Masères and Dr. Richard Price (1723–1791), on the basis of the latter's admirable actuarial calculations which for the first time gave a firm foundation to the practice of insurance—an immense benefit to succeeding generations—prepared schemes for Old Age Pensions on a contributory principle; Bills for the purpose of establishing this wise addition to the safeguards of the poor were introduced in 1773 and 1789. Each time the Commons passed and the Lords rejected the Bill; not till 1908 was the idea, so long ago proposed by these two Unitarian philanthropists, successfully embodied in an Act of Parliament.

But here our survey of so long and varied a history must conclude. Sufficient has been adduced, let us hope, to show the true spirit of Unitarian philanthropy, a spirit working in many ways, but ever the same, and to justify the hope that, towards the mighty stream of Christian beneficence which has been flowing through the centuries with such abundant blessing to our race, the Unitarian tributary has in proportion to its opportunities brought no unworthy share. That abundant good has been done in the past is certain—but no less certain is the need for further ameliorative and constructive effort to relieve mankind of the burden of needless suffering, and to build up human society on fairer lines. If the broad undogmatic type of religion is in the future to render a service in this direction alike worthy of itself and of its history there must be, we are deeply persuaded, a constant renewal of a sense of the noble principles and profound responsibilities which, as we have seen, have characterized its

past, viz. an abiding confidence in the resources and possibilities of Human Nature and in the benignant Over-ruling of the world in which we live, together with a deep conscientiousness, intellectual as well as moral, that will not suffer anything to be done in the name of philanthropy that is contrary to the wisdom that fully examines the causes of the evil and carefully estimates the results of measures taken for its relief. Above all, there is needed a renewal of generous and self-giving sympathy with our fellow-creatures; without it men may talk much and confer impressively, but little practical good is done. Towards such renewals the foregoing pages, it is hoped, may assist.

X

THE UNITARIAN MOVEMENT

By Francis A. Christie

Professor Francis A. Christie was born in 1858, and was educated at Amherst College, where he graduated A.B. in 1881, afterwards studying in Johns Hopkins University and in Germany at the Universities of Marburg, Heidelberg, and Berlin. Subsequently he received the Degree of D.D. (Amherst, 1909). After serving as Instructor in Harvard Divinity School for a year, he held the appointment of Professor of Church History in Meadville Theological School, Pennsylvania, from 1893–1924.

THE UNITARIAN MOVEMENT

The characteristics which make one religious fellowship different from another are not to be explained by reference merely to the typical views expressed. The personal influence of the men who lead the group, the polity of the organization, the immediate practical ends of the movement, the customs of worship, the hospitality or resistance of the religious atmosphere of the body to the various secular interests of life, the relation to local history and social standing—these and other factors attract or repel adherents, and this selective process reinforces the type of things that act by selection, giving increasing accentuation to what we may call the personality of the denomination. The modernism of theological view professed by Unitarians is sometimes indistinguishable from the modernism permitted in other Christian groups, and the necessity of a separate organization considered as a protest against older theological views is often disputed. Unitarian Christianity, however, persists, and its adherents are acutely conscious of the spiritual advantage which, as they assert, belongs to them in distinction from the modern liberal who is housed, however comfortably, in the other branches of Christendom. Many imponderable elements enter into their separate spiritual situation, but there are some that have obvious weight. An explanation of the Unitarian movement begins inevitably with the most conspicuous defining factor.

The first and fundamental characteristic of Unitarian Christianity is that it forms an undogmatic church. As such it is conducting a great historic experiment. Despite the implications of its name it is a church without official creed and without official theology. Its members, preachers and laymen, do not hesitate on occasion to make declaration of the things commonly believed among them as the proper interpretation of religious experience, but such common belief is strictly professed as only that which prevails in the given situation of social knowledge and insight, and it is not allowed to be instituted as a formula, or, if formulated by any volunteer, to become an authoritative tradition. This at once indicates that in the typical Unitarian there is a passion for truth, that for him truth is its own authority and must be sought by an honest inquiry kept scrupulously free and untrammelled. The pursuit of truth in a world of growing insight is impatient of the hindrances that lie in any formula established in the past, but, even if an expression of belief were attained that might be demonstrably infallible, there would still be an objection to the formal institution of it as the faith of a church. The demonstration would be accepted by those alone who by experience and culture had arrived at a certain stage of comprehension, while for the immature and those less given to reflection the supposedly infallible conviction would be an unattained goal and would operate as an alien constraint. For them it would not be spontaneous and inevitable. Its institution would limit the life of the church to those who had attained a certain degree of intellectual comprehension, while the religious unity of all is possible and desirable on a deeper level.

The spiritual realities of the soul's experience

reveal themselves before the right intellectual comprehension of them is possible, and the uninterpreted or even misinterpreted movements of the spirit in human hearts are a more fundamental and abiding ground for sympathetic and loving unity of life than agreement in the final understanding. Religious union begins before theological agreement. It begins whenever two souls recognize in one another a direct, real, and inward contact with the divine life. Whoever has found his way to an assured conception of the divine reality and its mode of entrance into a human life cannot check the craving for fellowship in the fundamental experience with those who have not begun to question and define or who halt in modes of thought which he has outgrown. He knows that it is possible for men to worship together and to live together in the spirit of Jesus without a creed, and the unlimited need of brotherhood which is his instinct tells him that a true catholicism must reject the use of any creed as a condition of religious union. Theological agreement is a desired goal, but to be a real agreement it must be won with a perfect sincerity and conscientiousness of thought and expression. These conditions of purity of soul are offered to him only by an undogmatic church. Just as an association of scientists is constituted and sustained, not by the adoption of a theory, however certain, but by a common purpose and aim, so a church is possible by virtue of the common purpose to seek contact with the divine life and to find mutual expression of the experience. Unitarianism is demonstrating that this simple and natural and satisfying catholicism is a secure fact and is the proper solution of all the conflicts of the past.

This passion for veracity and this passion for

catholicity are a development through a historical process. Unitarianism descends from the Socinians and Arminians. The great characteristic of these groups was not the body of conclusions they reached in respect to religious truth. It was their undogmatic method. The data interpreted and expressed were, to be sure, found by them in the objective revelation of Scripture, while the modern Unitarian, since Channing and Parker, shapes his convictions from the religious consciousness as an ultimate and independently valid functioning of the human spirit, cherishing the Bible as a classical expression of the intuitions of prophets and apostles supremely gifted with the religious sensibility. In their sole recourse to the Bible Socinians and Arminians were insistent on the method of inquiry into this source of truth. The search must be free of the control of any instituted tradition or creed, allowing, therefore, liberty of private judgment, and such investigation of the Bible conformed itself to that right use of reason which the culture of their age afforded for the study of religion. The Racovian Catechism offers, not dogma, but only conclusions as to the teaching of the Bible. "While we write a catechism, we prescribe nothing to any man; while we express our judgments, we oppress no one. Let every man have the free decision of his own mind in religion." As for changes in successive editions, "we think we need not blush if our church continues to make progress in some matters." The spirit and the method of the Socinians were developed by the Arminians. From that hour in Dortrecht in 1618 when Hales of Eton heard Episcopius and "bade John Calvin good-night," this spirit and this method found its way in the Church of England and in the eighteenth century even

among the Dissenters except the Independents. Free inquiry into the Bible resulted in anti-Trinitarian views in the Church of England. By the end of the seventeenth century the Trinitarian understanding of Scripture was on the defensive,[1] and the frankly Sabellian views of South and Wallis began to prevail, while somewhat later the semi-Arianism of the influential Samuel Clarke prevented a general drift to Socinianism. In this situation the obligation to the Thirty-nine Articles and to the ritual involved a point of honour, and after a vain effort of a considerable body of clergymen to persuade Parliament to relax the terms of subscription the conscience of Theophilus Lindsey required him to resign his living and in 1774 to open the first Unitarian chapel in London with a revision of Samuel Clarke's liturgy. Veracity was the thing at stake, and if sincere fidelity to the oracles of God is ground for a denomination, English Unitarianism may cherish reverence for its origin.

The same characteristic was entailed upon American Unitarianism by its origin. By the polity of their churches the Congregational clergy of Eastern Massachusetts were not constrained by the letter of a creed, and after the Revolution they were generally Arminian in respect to theological method, if not in respect to doctrinal conclusions. For them divine truth was to be found in the Bible, and they were chiefly zealous to be Bible Christians. Their parishes contained believers of divergent understanding of Scripture, and it was the pastor's duty to minister to all without controversy over doubtful or disputed points. When a conservative party, disposed to modify the Congregational polity on the Con-

[1] Bishop Bull, *Defense of the Nicene Faith*, 1685; Dean Sherlock, *Vindication of the Trinity*, 1690.

necticut model in order to have affiliation with the Presbyterian General Assembly, interjected the dormant issue of the Trinitarian doctrine, the avowal of an unorthodox understanding of Scripture was an honourable necessity for the rest.[1] Together with the conscientiousness which they shared with their opponents, the Unitarians were actuated by a love of catholicity. It was the withdrawal of a theological party which left them also in the position of a theological party, and this was distasteful to most. Their inherited ideal was that of the community church in which men of divergent opinions could worship together as followers of Jesus. The process was long and slow and difficult by which these churches consented to be a denomination, and when they did so, it has been a repudiation of those conditions of denominational life which make a sect or a theological party. The horror of sectarianism, the passionate feeling for catholicity which rings in Channing's powerful discourse on the church, have actuated the group in its endeavour to find the simplest possible and the most inclusive basis for a church organization. In the end it has found that basis in the conception of a church as a union for religion understood as love to God

[1] *Editor's Note.*—The English reader unacquainted with the details of New England Congregationalism may be partially enlightened by the following statement by the Rev. Dr. J. H. Allen (*An Historical Sketch of the Unitarian Movement since the Reformation*, 1894): "The liberal party were, and are, justly tenacious of their right of membership in the historic Congregational order. In Massachusetts this has never been denied them. But in Connecticut the 'consociation' was better able to deal with heresy. Here the process of separation, or exclusion, was already begun. In 1805 the minister of Mansfield, Mr. John Sharman, was deposed for free thinking on the subject of the Trinity. . . . Five years later, at Coventry, Rev. Abiel Abbot was taken in hand by the consociation of that district" (p. 189).

and man. The single church is constituted by a covenant, not a creed, by a common purposive act. The typical form of such a covenant is the following: "In the love of truth and the spirit of Jesus Christ we unite for the worship of God and the service of man." Such a constitutive engagement creates a religious union, but it leaves every man free to conceive God and God's relation to the world and man as conscience and spiritual progress may require. This freedom and simplicity have been found to be a source of happiness and a challenge to conscientious thoughtfulness which no other condition could allow. The complete toleration thus practised within the church enjoins and secures, moreover, toleration and sympathy towards every other religious group, so that the quest of universal union and concord becomes a distinctive trait of the whole movement. There is so much the more pain at their exclusion from the federation of the other churches.

This fundamental characteristic of undogmatic and catholic religion is strikingly exhibited in the prayers and hymns which are used in the order of worship. The effort here is to utter those elemental and universal responses of reverent awe and suppliant need which come from depths of the soul into which the differences of intellectual opinion do not penetrate. No suggestion of theological view is allowed to intrude into the act of worship and communion. It is surely in prayer and hymn that the spirit of a man is found, and the actual life of the undogmatic church in its scrupulous concentration upon worship as its constitutive principles and its controlling desire for spiritual unification with all men may be instanced best of all by the order of worship in most common use.

What has been said would seem to be at variance

with the fact that Unitarianism has been characterized by a polemic attitude towards the older theology. The contradiction which is so apparent can, however, be resolved. The polemic arose because the universality which was felt to be the mark of Christianity was imperilled by the theology reacting against the growing liberalism. This is evident from the theological history of Unitarianism in the nineteenth century. So far as the matter of a philosophic *Weltanschauung* and biblical criticism is concerned, Unitarian modernism has not been distinctive. It has shared in such modern movements of thought with the one special credit alone of being earlier receptive to the new light than others. Its main concern as a religious movement has not been for a philosophic conception of the universe. True, Priestley, even before Herder, had propounded the doctrine of divine immanence, but with such corollaries, and such poverty of historical application as compared with Herder, that Unitarians eventually came to enthusiasm for the conception only as Priestley was forgotten and the German current of thought had set in. Having a chartered freedom, Unitarians more easily and at an earlier date espoused the modern biblical criticism and the theory of evolution, but the distinctive and typical thing in their theological history must surely be found in their emphasis on the universality of divine grace—a principle not obtained as a part of a general philosophic construction. Apart from this participation in a general modern drift of thought, the theological history of Unitarianism appears to fall into two periods. The name of Parker initiates the second period. Before Parker the source of truth was found in the biblical revelation. After Parker the source of truth is found in the natural religious consciousness.

In the period before Parker the thing at stake for a Unitarian was the doctrine of human nature. The long reign of Augustinianism was nearing the end. Calvin and Melanchthon had formulated sharply enough the view that in man, as he is by birth and until a miracle of grace transforms him, there is only contempt of God and hatred of good. How appalling this doctrine became appears in the horrifying sermons of Jonathan Edwards. It does not appear that the clergy of the eighteenth century in the New England colonies arrived at heresy by any direct attack upon the general Calvinist construction or upon this particular conception of human nature. Their theology was remoulded by an indirect process. They were more and more attentive to the eighteenth-century political thought which came from Europe and gave them arguments against the policy of the English Crown. That political thought, however, emphasized the conception of a natural man responsive to reason and endowed with that very unselfishness of heart which the school of Edwards identified as a state of regeneration wrought by divine grace. The thorough adoption of this political thought discovered to them at last the incongruity of it with the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity by nature, and the discovery prompted a fresh examination of Scripture with an interest now irreconcilable with the Calvinist creed. Their departure from orthodoxy began with their more hopeful view of man and with their reliance on Christian nurture rather than on a catastrophic conversion. The liberalism which had publicity was related to this matter. In their ensuing and progressive emancipation from the creed their understanding of Scripture with regard to the person of Christ also suffered change; but in an age when no distinction could

be made between Synoptic and Johannine and Pauline views the feeling could only be that as to Trinity and Christology the contents of Scripture were not perfectly transparent. This topic was wholly subordinate to the other and was argued only after Jedediah Morse had made it a ground of attack. Then, indeed, the imitableness of the human Christ became a conviction of special value. The main thing, the positive thing in the beginning, was such a view of human nature as repudiated the fearful conception of a race utterly and abominably depraved, of a God who justly hated the *massa perditionis* and for inscrutable reasons arbitrarily elected a few for the display of his mercy. Over against this they preached man as a being who, for all his sad moral history, is by nature responsive to good and who is being taught and chastened by a loving Father incapable of hating anything that he has made. With Channing this affirmation reached its most ardent and inspiring declaration. The universal Father with a remedial grace for all his defective children was the great position, the distinguishing doctrine. Everything else is subsidiary to this. The anti-Trinitarianism of the movement, apart from its origin in Bible texts, has its positive meaning in that unity of divine character which had been sacrificed by the hypostatizing and opposition of attributes. God was One by the unity of his character of love.

The dynamic impelling movement of the first period is thus seen to be towards a revival of the principle of catholicity inherent in Christianity, but checked by the sectarianism which would discriminate a self-conscious body of the elect as the sole recipients of the grace of God. The period which began with Parker is an intelligible and consistent forward step in the same direction

of movement. It opens with Parker's famous *Discourse of Religion* in 1842, in which the young pastor, with amazing erudition and with a penetrating intuition which has been seldom adequately recognized, dealt with the phenomena of religion with what we should now call a *religionsgeschichtliche* and psychological method. It is generally recognized that for Protestant theology in general a new era began with Schleiermacher's effort to elicit all doctrines or convictions from that functioning of our being which we call the religious consciousness in distinction from any explanatory or ethical reaction to reality. This was an emancipation of religion and religious doctrine from mere Biblicism and from the dictation of a philosophical theory, whether that of the older rationalism or the speculative idealism which followed. It opened the way to a genuinely scientific treatment of religious convictions such as the older dogmatics could not furnish. Parker should be seen in this light. He was not wholly dependent on Schleiermacher. Channing, as distinctly as Schleiermacher, refused to start from a speculative notion of the Absolute. "We must start in religion from our own souls." Channing was arriving also at that discrimination of the religious consciousness by which Schleiermacher enriched Kant's trilogy of explanation, ethical and æsthetic. "We have faculties for the spiritual as truly as for the outward world." Parker began where Channing left off, and his clearer analytic penetration was shaped by the Cambridge Platonists as well as by Schleiermacher and by the school of Fries as known through De Wette. The insight, however, was not dependent on book learning. Parker was a man of native religious genius. The modern psychological students of religious experience can ill afford to neglect the ardent

and spontaneous utterance of his communion with God. Defects and inconsistencies belong to his discussion, but the main idea supported by this anticipation of comparative religion and critical analysis is luminous and in its effect revolutionary—even if it may be said to lurk in the *textus Quakerorum* of John i. 9. It is the affirmation of a religious "faculty" or capacity by which man, not when reconstituted by miracle, but through his native endowments, receives the action of God which is the health and healing of the soul. "Prayer is no soliloquy, but a sally into the infinite spiritual world whence we bring back light and truth." Inspiration—this being but another name for the grace of God found in religious experience—is coextensive with the race. The same everywhere in kind, it differs in degree according to man's use of his endowment, but it is never a coercion *ab extra*. It is the regular divine action on the sensitive receptive spirit whose powers it employs. The higher degrees of this direct experience when "the soul in faith rushes to its God" may be rare. "These hours, like the flower of the aloe tree, may be rare, but are yet the celestial blossoming of man." The high Christian privileges are thus but the clear, intense, supremely powerful instances of an experience of God which is universally human. With this insight all the pent-up tension of the restricted catholicity of Christianity was liberated. The distinction of natural and revealed religion faded out. The way to universal religion was open. The spiritual unification of all mankind was again the quest and prayer of men. Christianity could be that spiritual unification, that holy Catholic Church, by releasing itself from all those misconceptions which limit or deny the universality of divine grace. James

Freeman Clarke essayed such an extrication of the elements of Christianity valid for man as man in his *Orthodoxy, Its Truths and Errors* (1866), and immediately began with lectures in the Harvard Divinity School that pioneer survey of world-wide phenomena which he published in his *Ten Great Religions*. This thought of universal religion was not a cold academic idea, but a passionate faith. It found lyrical utterance, and many a Unitarian unversed in the literature which began with Clarke's lectures has breathed the faith by aid of the hymns of Samuel Johnson and Samuel Longfellow. Few hymns have been sung more often than Johnson's "Life of Ages" or Longfellow's "One Holy Church of God Appears." Just as the thought of the neighbour near at hand prompts the Unitarian to sing Theodore Williams' song of brotherhood,

> "When thy heart enfolds a brother
> God is there,"

so the vision of mankind requires him to sing with these other poets of the one universal spiritual life where the sense of one divine beneficence, one divine allegiance, shelters and enfolds all men. The brotherhood of man may be to some minds an anthropological doctrine. In the worship of a Unitarian church it is an enlarging religious idea which has all the richness and authority of that which is correlated and connoted—the universal fatherhood of God and the universality of his beneficent grace. In this faith and aspiration the Unitarian feels his emancipation from every sectarian or merely denominational attitude. His spirit is enlarged with that out-reaching catholic impulse which marked the birth of ethical monotheism in the Hebrew prophets, which in the Epistle to the Ephesians summoned all races to

a new human unity in the Christian church, and which found again its lofty modern utterance in Channing's discourse.

Enough has been said to justify the claim that Unitarianism as a religious movement is not to be characterized by any system of metaphysics. It is rather the religious concurrent of the great enterprise which in universities is known as comparative religion or the science of religion. If the account of religion now prevalent in Unitarian circles is to be defined, it might be found sadly deficient in solving all the vexed problems of the relation of God to the world, although the sympathy would certainly be with the emphasis on divine immanence. The account would rather be that in all races and in all times there is a human experience which is specifically religious, not an effort at intellectual explanation, but a primal and spontaneous recognition of dealing with something sacred, holy, divine. These words are practically synonymous. A man is religious, says Söderblom, to whom something is holy. In the presence of this discovered "holy" there is a sense of being tied or obligated, a vague sense of "ought" which in higher development might culminate in the saint's rapturous self-surrender with the saint's sense of elation and freedom. Hebrew prophets read the deeper meaning of this obligation in the "holy" and found that the Lord was holy through righteousness. That spell of awe and attraction, that need of yielding self, that obligatoriness, was the mandate of ethical righteousness. The prophet felt the universality of this righteousness whereby God was holy, and knew that the one only God realizes a will of moral good in the whole world. Just as the prophet heard the imperative, so he heard also the prediction of fulfilment, and his soul leaped

to the vision of the future and perfect Kingdom of God. So in the fullness of time Jesus declared the deeper depth of meaning in the holy righteousness of God by his utterances of the divine fatherhood and of the life of love which alone could be the submission of self to the authoritative holy will. When it is said that the word of the Lord came to Hebrew prophets and was supremely disclosed in Jesus and by Jesus, it is meant that these great souls, uniquely sensitive to religious experience and uniquely clear in their intuitive comprehension of it, were elucidating more purely and more profoundly all that was involved in the earliest and the universal human experience. The Unitarian heir to this evolution of comprehension knows with others that it is an evolution through a certain current of historic life in the Western world, but he sees that it does not rise or fall with special contingent peculiarities of the Occidental man. It is valid for man as a moral personality. It is universal religion. It states the truth implicit in any human awe before the holy presence. And universal religion alone will suffice the Unitarian.

Hence his polemic against a doctrine of human nature divorced from the life of God by a complete corruption. Hence the repudiation of a caste of the elect, of a salvation limited by knowledge and acceptance of an atonement through Christ's death. Hence the negation of everything that contradicts the faith in a Father of universal grace and a humanity embrothered in God's impartation of light and leading whatever be the diversities and crudities of varying human conceptions. The Unitarians adopt the hymn of Matheson :

> " Gather us in, thou Love that fillest all;
> Gather our rival faiths within thy fold."

Singing such a hymn as their positive faith, they know that historic Christianity must discard some misconceptions to be within the fold of that all-embracing Love. They frankly mean that Christianity, though the highest evolution in religion, can only become the world-religion it means to be and tends to be by assuming the simplicity which Unitarianism would fain achieve.

Into that fold of the divine Love the Unitarian would bring his response to the leadership of Jesus, not only as a name marking a climax of religious evolution, but as a truly sacramental means for men of receiving the grace of God. The new arrival from orthodoxy reacting against the scheme of salvation is not likely to indorse the last utterance, but if Thom and Martineau and Drummond and Channing and Parker and Clarke or those who are their heirs are speaking in the household of faith, this is their voice. For the modern Unitarian eliciting his religious statements from experience there can be no doctrine about Jesus save as a statement of the degree and manner in which the man of Galilee stimulates and clarifies the religious consciousness. For the Unitarian there is still the wonderful note of the concord of the divine and the human, the eternal and the temporal, in the life of the man Jesus. Just as the dying Bunsen could say to his wife, " In thine eyes I have seen the Eternal," so the Johannine saying persists, " He that hath seen Jesus hath seen the Father." In neither case is there any thought of identity of being or ontological speculation about two natures in one person. Even the " value-judgment " of Ritschl or Herrmann seems like a sophistry. It would be difficult to find a Unitarian who would go beyond the adoptionism of Paul of Samosata, though the anxiety is not to have a historic master

in theology, but rather to have a scrupulous and adequate expression of what is possible experience. It is enough to say, in whatever individual fashion that experience suggests, that in the man Jesus, subject like other men to historical limitations, there is seen a perfect righteousness of will which was a thrilling gift of love and compassion for the man guilty of unrighteousness, and that in this sheer absoluteness of loving goodness the human heart recognizes that perfection of goodness which the Father shows to men. This mirroring of the divine love in a human character enables many a needy man to fling away his distress and grief and to cast himself with confidence upon the infinite compassion of God. Into this experience the metaphysical theory about substance and nature do not enter. *Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia ejus cognoscere, non ejus naturas, modos incarnationis contueri.* Jesus can render such a spiritual office to any human soul who can see and rejoice in goodness, and he can be an efficacious Christ to a whole world without invalidating the grace mediated to men through other saviours.

The policy of these churches in regard to foreign missions has been conditioned by the attitude of sympathy already explained. The desire could not be to induce the Oriental to discard his own spiritual tradition abruptly and to think his life in terms of Western history. What corresponds to the customary foreign missionary work exists in the relations sought by the Unitarian body with circles in India and Japan. The effort has been to present the simplicity and catholicity of the Unitarian apprehension of Christianity to minds that were endeavouring to mould Oriental faiths into a kindred theism. The typical instance is the friendship and co-operation established with

the Brahmo Somaj of India, a circle whose spiritual life has recently been illustrated to the Western world by the writings of Tagore. Students of the Brahmo Somaj resort to the Unitarian theological schools in England and America. Such schools and such students find an essential agreement in faith. The Unitarians think of the Brahmo Somaj as their own movement expressing itself in terms of Indian tradition.

At the outset it was said that a religious movement is not to be defined solely by its theological statements. Life in a Unitarian communion seems to involve a certain relation to the general life of the world, a hospitable co-operation with its progressive tendencies in education, reform, government. Out of all proportion to its numbers it breeds leaders in the work of local and national progress. There were brave men before Agamemnon, and there was progress before there were Unitarian churches, but it is nevertheless true that the spirit of service for the world is in constant generation in such churches and that it is regarded as an integral part of piety. To support philanthropies, to foster schools and libraries and reforms of government, to seek and to share culture—these are undoubted general tendencies among the Unitarians of Hungary, of England, of America. We may or may not easily deduce these interests from the faith professed in the churches. There is many a gap between logic and life. The logic of the New England theology forbade Hopkins to love any whom God did not love, and since a man could not certainly identify the elect his love of another must be tentative and provisional. But Hopkins was a philanthropist and loved the enslaved negroes without waiting for certainty about the divine decrees. Wilberforce and the Evangelicals were prodigal with

philanthropy, but held doctrines about man and God which Unitarians would regard as fatal to such generous instincts. In any case philanthropy is inevitable in Unitarianism. A brave array of American authors attended Unitarian churches. The Brook Farm community makes a chapter in the history both of literature and of Unitarianism. The exact relation between this New England Renaissance and the emergence of Unitarianism is a nice problem for investigation. It would be fatal to infer that Unitarians necessarily excel in literary culture or scholarly erudition. It is enough to note that there is a characteristic sympathy between the religious humanism and the humanism of culture and that a love of human completeness is really a mark of this religious movement. *Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen, resolut zu leben*—many a Unitarian has echoed Goethe with a genuinely pious fervour. There is a complete absence of that hostility to intellectual quests which has marked the circles related to German pietism. This is not because the piety of the Unitarians is itself intellectualism. It means only that the great modern tendency to reconceive the Kingdom of God as involving an intramundane expression and a transformation of the total life of the world has found in the men named Unitarians agents peculiarly sensitive and responsive. In every variety of expression they have echoed Aquinas: *Gratia naturam non tollit sed perficit.* The old antithesis of church and world has ceased to be a regulative thought. "To resemble our Maker," said Channing, "we need not quarrel with our nature or our lot. Our present state is worthy of God and may be used throughout to assimilate us to him." Instinctively and without much reasoning this type of religion refused to isolate and abstract the

religious consciousness from all other normal responses to the world's appeals, from scientific explanation, ethical choice, æsthetic joy. In the Middle Ages monasticism had made an instructive failure with such an effort to limit and isolate that which was specifically religious. The effort proved itself unwholesome by its production of stunted and unserviceable men and by the blight that threatened religious feeling itself in the spiritual malady of accedia. The story of David Brainerd illustrates a similar morbidity of result in the Edwardean circles absorbed in religious emotionalism divorced from life. The Unitarians learned what Channing reiterates—that in a life in which ethical religious feeling dominates, all other good becomes moral, and that an organic unity of our propensities is essential to the health and salvation of our personality. To love God with the whole mind as well as the heart, to conform self to him with the whole personal being, to conceive the grace of God indeed as ministered in the illumination of the inquiring intelligence as well as in the tender mystery of the presence that dawns as worshipful holiness to the penitent and prayerful heart—that has been an insistent theme in this young tradition, though now somewhat obscured by the hard practicalities of social reform. For a long time study-classes for the higher literature were a distinctive feature of these churches. Apparently the rush of life to-day has less time for such spiritual enlargement.

The unity of character in God, the harmonious unity that religion can establish with life—these faiths are seemingly fundamental to that complete engagement with the world's progress that relates Channing and his heirs to the life of citizenship. The false, abstract antithesis of nature and grace had gone. The disinterested love which

the Edwardeans attributed to a miracle of grace was found in the natural man, just as natural defects persist in the saint. Conformity of the personal being to the divine original of human personality was seen as a salvation only imperfectly yet progressively realized. For that salvation all men are capacitated. The Kingdom of God is every man's birthright. Every man is heir expectant. Honour is due to all men who are moving towards that fulfilment of personal being. At once the earthly vista of life obtained a programme. It was not a mere waiting-place to contemplate a perfection beyond death. It was the arena for the toil of a fraternity of men seeking personal fulfilment. In the Christian ethics the principle of democracy long had slumbered. Now it came to sudden manifestation. Channing and Parker became publicists and prophets of a complete democracy—a democracy extending beyond rights of suffrage into economic reforms and the equalization of culture. Democracy and Christianity were for them interchangeable as social manifestations. Both meant the concerted ardour of moral persons to achieve their destiny. The quest of a free society of mutually co-operating moral persons united in mutual trust, mutual honour, and loyal fraternity was but another expression of the conformity of our flesh to the divine Fatherhood. Many a follower of Channing feels that his religion is the overtone of the music of the American life. Whatever be the measure of the service rendered to social progress, here at least is an attestation of the instinct for spiritual unification which is an essential mark of this religious type.

And what are the prospects of this movement which appears thus to draw momentum from the Christian past and to reach forward with hope

of a new synthesis destined to enrich the meaning of the name Christian? The new catholicism fares somewhat as the early Christians fared. In the earliest the Christian forfeited worldly place and bore the monstrous charge of atheist and enemy of the human race. Such is the peril of those who deny ancient sanctities, however outworn and discredited those sanctities may be. Something analogous has marked the fortunes of Unitarian churches. Misconception and disparagement have restrained their growth. Under the law of England civil disabilities lingered until 1813. In America, save in Eastern Massachusetts, social and professional success had to be paid for a time as the price of existence. Then, too, being pioneers of Protestant modernism, they have moved forward without halts to consolidate their gains. An energy which could have been confined to propaganda was spent by preference in social reforms. The relaxation of orthodoxy in older churches prevented recruits. Yet the ground of confidence for the future is twofold. The catholic unification of humanity is an irresistible human necessity and can be accomplished only in the form of a free, undogmatic church. The second ground is the certainty that in the modern world convictions and interpretations must be won by the use of a scientific method. The scientific method steadily wins adherence in theological schools. The data of experience can be agreed upon, and the agreement is growing. The meanings implicit in experience can be explicated by a common method into forms commonly accepted. Unitarianism does not aim at anything else, and it is not deterred by the fear of any change in its present consensus of faith. When it sees farther, it will go farther.

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